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# The Problem Solved.

# THE PROBLEM SOLVED;

OR,

## Sin not of God.

BY

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NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY M. W. DODD,  
Corner of Spruce St. and City Hall Square.

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## P R E F A C E.

THE following Treatise is the result of some reflection upon the subject in years past, and is, in brief, the transcript of my own method of analysis respecting it, and in contemplating the relations of God to *moral evil*. I would have the work regarded as merely an epitome of thought on the main question at issue, rather than a full discussion of it, and of the general analogies of truth as affiliated with it. The matters here suggested will give the general principles of the whole discussion; will state the law of the harmony of the being and ways of God; and call back attention to those *first truths* of reason and common sense, within which must lie the terms of the solution of our whole problem. A greater breadth of statement might have been indulged in, and resources drawn, in behalf of the main conclusions stated, from a resort to all objective truth—from the doctrines of science and history—of liberty and law—of social and civil rights—and from the principles of all morals, as applied in literature and the arts, and in every walk and relation of life. But an extended reference in these directions is withheld. Beyond a concise enumeration of the grounds of the chief

direct issue made, I would not go, on a subject so intrinsically fundamental and important, without the action of other minds on the principles of the method here taken. Legitimate criticism gives light, and brings resources to truth. The best thought is the inheritance of the aggregate mind of the world and of the age.

Should the method here pursued be for edification, in respect to the chief moral aspects and bearings of truth—should it help to give the relations of the Infinite to wrong, and contribute something toward a legitimate and satisfactory adjustment of the long-attempted and difficult problem of *moral evil*, the volume will not fail of its object.

BELOIT COLLEGE, 1854.



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# THE PROBLEM SOLVED.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTION.

RELIGION is the demand of our being. Intelligence involves obligation. We are innately responsible creatures. Morality and virtue have *subjective* validity in respect to us. The claims of all righteousness are the inheritance of our reason, and are thus verified, as imposed from all our objective relations.

Revelation has its stronghold in this. It lies in a mine of necessary ideas. Its principles are first-truths of reason. Its doctrines are an overt and authoritative statement and form of that, which, in principle, can but be true. Its informations rest on this basis, and culminate from it. It declares there is one God ; a plurality of Gods is an impossibility. It ascribes all perfection to the Infinite One. What else could be characteristic of him ? It reveals sin as in the finite, and



by apostasy. Is it possible elsewhere, and otherwise? It records transgression as remediless, except it be met by atonement and a gracious redemption; this is a first-truth of reason. Penitence and faith are there given as the terms of restoration to God; these are inherently the affections, without which restoration can neither be granted nor received. And thus the principles of all religion may be verified as found either in the Bible, or emanating from the perfections, or works of God.

Theology should possess these characteristics and admit of these references. The philosophy of religion must observe its concrete statements. No economy of doctrine can be legitimate, which ignores the dictates of reason, and the moral sense. These are inherently of us, and cannot be spirited away by any show of creeds that may be imposed. Revelation is made to us, and for us, and will accord with the principles of being given us. It cannot belie our mental constitution, or trample on the laws of morality and righteousness, planted there.

The history of the church has exhibited much imperfection of statement, in her theories of religious truth. The progress of all philosophy

has been slow. It is, as a distinguished French writer has well said, "the ultimate development of the human mind." This is as was to be expected; and yet it is a calamity, and one through which religion has greatly suffered. While yet philosophy was in its infancy, and the laws of mind were subjected to no accurate analysis; men attempted the organization of religious creeds, and sought to give the law of that under-current of abstract ideas which shall account for all that lies upon the surface, or in the concrete and historic relations of events. This they have undertaken at great disadvantage often, and, as we might anticipate, have egregiously failed. No more signal example of this can, perhaps, be referred to, than in theories which have been formed, concerning the introduction of *moral evil*.

This subject is one of much inherent difficulty. Sin is anomalous to the divine economy of the universe. It is *of right nowhere and nohow*, and its appropriate relations can scarcely be stated with too much caution. Its competent investigation demands an enlarged study of the laws of mind,—of the attributes of moral government, and of the philosophy of all truth. But the sub-

ject is one that must be investigated. It is practical in its relations, and cannot be ignored. Duty and destiny cluster in it,—all that is dear in the present and the future. The spirit of inquiry is awakening with fresh interest concerning it, and demands its more ample and satisfactory adjustment. More than any other religious doctrine, it will be *the problem of the age*. Its review and discussion have become a necessity. Not clergymen only, but intelligent and reflecting men in other spheres of life, are calling for it, and not a few stumble “at this stone of stumbling,” and shelter themselves here against the claims of religion. Infidelity gets defences here; religionists split on this rock, and the edge of divine truth is blunted in its approaches to the common mind.

Nor need the crisis be feared. This problem can be solved, as legitimately and fully as any other in the philosophy of truth. It has some advantages from the dictates of reason, the intimations of the moral sense, and the exponents found in a positive and communicated revelation. Indeed, it should not have become so difficult as it has. A crude and ill-digested philosophy has overridden and encumbered it. Our

metaphysics have been at fault, and carried their fictitious issues into the domain of theology. We dive, deeper than our depth not only, but deeper than the truth. If but that rubbish, which is the accumulation of ages, were removed, the whole subject could be seen in the light of a few first-truths, common to the human mind, familiar in our experience, and fully grouped, and comprehended in the Saviour's "parable of the tares of the field." Matthew, ch. 13.

Of this necessity, and these aspirations, a somewhat recent publication\* on the relations of sin, is a significant manifestation and type. Its appearance should not surprise or disconcert us. We may hail it rather as the entering wedge of an important discussion, which shall sink down into the *elements* of religious truth, and bear benignly on the apprehension and success of the Gospel. A concise reference to this work will be made in the foreground of the present Treatise.

"*The Conflict of Ages*" is written in a good spirit, and evinces much learning and research. Its subject and its method have secured for it an

\* Dr. E. Beecher's "Conflict of Ages," &c.

extended circulation. Its comprehensive summary of theological opinions on the nature and relations of sin, gives it value, while its utterances of the long conflicts and deep convictions of its author, speak for it sympathy and consideration. True, it is exposed to many and insurmountable objections, and fails in the remedy it proposes. It can be easily replied to, and the author's position be shown to be yet in that magic and vicious circle, from which he is ever striving to escape. But it brings up the problem, with its mighty interests, vividly to the mind, and will mingle in, and help give direction to, the theological literature of the age. Error will take advantage of it, if truth does not; and we may, from whatever cause, anticipate a result favorable to those great principles of honor and right in the Deity, for which Dr. B. so manfully contends. The defects which this author points out in past and present theories on the subject, have not, and cannot be successfully gainsaid. He has canvassed them with much erudition and ability; and though, for the sake of his hypothesis, he yields unduly to the anomaly of a physical depravity, he makes out a valid case of mal-adjustment against prevalent

opinions on this subject, both old and new. His management of the argument at this point is masterly, and well worth the attention of the divine and the scholar. He is right, also, in respect to the two great powers of Christianity, and the necessity of their harmonious operation in a moral system. Sin is in the world, and yet God is "*right and honorable,*" in his relations to it. The facts of the case must be admitted, and yet reason and the moral convictions of the soul *must* justify God, in the premises. Moral government is not an enigma, nor is the character of the Deity an inappreciable postulate.

But this portion of the book will be read with interest by very many, and needs not to be here subjected to any rigid analysis. What is most obvious is, that Dr. B. has not, in his whole discussion, grappled with the main features of the great subject which he has introduced. His book relates to a side issue, growing out of the general fact of sin in the universe. It is mainly occupied with the historic development of sin in the present life, and with difficulties which arise from his submission to the physical theory of native depravity and original sin. This may be dismissed, and not suffered to dis-

turb the issue we make, whether the present be the first or second stage of our being. The question is not so much whether men have depravity, before they sin, as, how comes it that they sin at all, in this, or any previous sphere. How comes it that that "abominable thing which God hates," is? Where is the philosophical account of the introduction of wrong? How treat of *that*, so as not to implicate the Deity in his goodness, or his power? Solve this problem of sin, in its incipency, as a method and an economy of wrong, and justify God in respect to it, to the principles of all "honor and right" which he has given us, and we may come with a firmer step to the subject of the historic manifestations of the principle of wrong in this world, and the divine relations to it here. This, Dr. B. does not much attempt. He speaks of certain "limitations of divine power, and certain intense sufferings" on the part of the Deity, as incidental to the commencement of a divine, moral system, as that which indicates a solution of it; and it could be wished that he had dwelt longer on these thoughts, and studied them more profoundly. They seem to have flitted as by accident across the horizon of his view. Had

he detained them for a more perfect analysis, in their relations to his theme, they might have brought him out into a clearer light, on the whole matter in discussion. His early trouble was with the doctrine of physical depravity, though he has evidently grown more in favor with it since adopting his present hypothesis. But that doctrine should not obscure our vision of the real issue, or decoy us from the investigation of the main problem. The present, it is true, is a sphere of sovereignty, but is it not a righteous sovereignty? Do not the principles of "honor and right" obtain as legitimately here as elsewhere? May we here, in utter oblivion of any past existence, awake to consciousness, under an organic depravity of nature,—under all social, evil influences, and all fierce temptations of "malignant spirits," better on his system than on that of others? How are all these disabilities more honorable in respect to God here, than in a primal state of being, and *especially* if the present be a divinely-appointed method, and sphere of recovery *from* a state of sin, induced in a sphere of far greater advantages? If "malignant spirits" could not be suffered to tempt the unfallen, how could they be



let loose on the fallen, in an economy whose whole features and design are recovery from sin, and restoration to God?

I make no reference to the specific reasonings, and cast of the book, further than to say that the great question of sin lies back of its reasonings and design, and is not materially affected by them; and that the remedy proposed in the book would not, if authentic, be of much avail in solving the integral problem involved. It might bring some relief to the terms of a defective theology, but would come with a crippled and halting energy, in behalf of the grand principles of honor and right for which Dr. B. is so resolutely enlisted.

The remedy suggested by him must, then, be regarded as a failure. If not fanciful, it is inadequate. If it changes somewhat the terms of the controversy, it furnishes no radical cure of the difficulties inherent in the subject. It interpolates a link in the chain of events, but presents no new principle of adjustment. The old philosophy remains, with some of its outposts assailed, and something of its weakness betrayed, for the admonition and benefit of those by whom it is entertained. Dr. B. is still, in

respect to the great question of the existence of sin, in the same category with those whose views, with such massive and sturdy thought, he exposes; only that he stands in the dim distance of an hypothesis, for which neither revelation, consciousness, nor reason, give any intimation. The fundamental error in this case, as in most who have written on the subject, is in the *direction* of the inquiry. The search is ever in the *objective*, instead of the *subjective*, of truth. We extend the scale of being, we dilate the sphere of existence and the universe, in the hope of finding a place for the existence of wrong; we extenuate its evils, and magnify its qualities, as a discipline to virtue, and thus attempt to justify it, as a constituent in the divine economy of things. But all effort in this behalf is of little avail. Reason and conscience refuse to be satisfied with our explorations into the infinite unknown of the outward sphere. There is no widening of it, that will make the existence of sin in it to be consistent as a divine economy, or convert solecism to mystery, or invest that mystery with the obligations of faith. The real inquiry lies in the *subjective*. The solution of our problem is there. It may be sought, and

must be, in the nature and necessary relations of moral government. And here our progress is assured and easy. We get intuitive validity at every step, under endorsement from the convictions of the moral sense and of the Word of God. The subject may be condensed to a single page, may be caught at a glance of the eye, and is, in its philosophy, comprised in any single moral movement of the soul. The spontaneous convictions, detected in the analysis of any wrong act, present the features and solution of this whole subject. I do wrong,—consciousness proclaims me the author of that wrong, and its efficient cause; alone responsible for it as an *economy* and an act, and as done contrary to the authority of God, and against His will. This is truth according to reason, conscience, and revelation, and no plea of metaphysics can make it otherwise. And it describes the whole philosophy of wrong, both as a method and a fact, and places it in the finite, and not of God in either respect. It accounts for sin, as being in the sinner, and gives the relations of God as in every way antagonistic to it, and thus shows the unity and coalescence of truth as seen in its concrete relations, and in its abstract and comprehensive

statement. The whole truth in the premises lies much on the surface of the subject, and is read in those spontaneous convictions which spring up in the mind on the occurrence of sin. Our conscious feelings then, and there, are the exponents of all true theory respecting it. The solution demanded is thus reduced to that of an experience, and an experience, too, in every man's bosom.

And what is the instruction in general which is thus gained? Simply and obviously this: that sin is not a divine method; that it is in no sense the primordial arrangement of God; that all His relations to it are antagonistic and in the way of prevention, remedy, and punishment; that He is no way responsible for it, or its mischiefs, except in the exercise of his infinite wisdom in these antagonistic relations to it; and that all the glory of God, as growing out of the existence of sin, lies in the methods of his all-wise providence against it, and in carrying out His great end in all things, notwithstanding it, and in despite of it. The homogeneity of this view, and its accordance with the dictates of the moral sense, will be acknowledged by every one, and its desirableness, if in accordance with all

affiliated truth. The objections to it, if any, lie in the deductions of philosophy concerning the subject; but of philosophy, which, though stereotyped, is nevertheless anomalous and sophisticated, and failing to appreciate what is due and necessarily appertaining to an economy of moral government.

## CHAPTER II.

### ERRORS IN PHILOSOPHY.

**B**EFORE proceeding to a statement of the principles, on which this view of the relations of sin rests, I must be allowed, then, to refer to some of the vicious features of the philosophy alluded to, and which have so long and so sadly led to error and strife.

The matters here excepted to, and whose fallacy ought, on every principle of truth, to be suggested, follow no exact law of sequence. They are fragmentary often in their relations, and must be referred to in a desultory way; although they have together, and as associated with kindred elements, contributed to rear a framework of philosophic belief, which, as conceded truth, holds prevalent sway over the theological mind of the world, perhaps, and especially in this country. These I shall refer to, as inwrought into the very woof of whole sys-

tems of metaphysics, more than in the "*totidem verbis*" of individual writers.

1. *That motive is the cause of choice.* This position overlooks the difference between cause and condition. It gives the power of causation to that which is foreign to the agent, and no way constitutently belonging to him, and inherently of him. Voluntary action, to be intelligent and responsible, must be within the sphere of reasons, and grounds, and inducements, cognizable by the intelligence, and the agent possessing it; but to make *these* the cause of voluntary action, is like calling the atmosphere the cause of respiration, since without it, respiration is out of place, and impossible. Not every "*sine quâ non*" is true cause, in given premises; and it is the oversight of this distinction, that has given currency to the notion of an interminable chain of causation to any given effect, and led, perhaps, to one of the most seductive and prevalent forms of pantheism, while, as one of its results, it has wrought confusion in the ethical, as well as logical, relations of the subject in discussion. It is impossible to assign moral character to that which is merely an effect. A necessitated virtue is no virtue. Character and

conduct are inherently elective and optional. If the principle of cause resides not in the agent himself who chooses, and is not constitutively of him, but in something else, and lies properly in the reasons, grounds, or considerations, and inducements, in view of which he chooses; then, on the last analysis, is all cause, and with it all responsibility, resident in God alone, and all morality elsewhere inconceivable and out of the question.

2. *That propensities are an incipient, and not a resultant state of mind.* Propensity follows the law of habit. It is an accretion of the history, either in the individual or the race. There may be hereditary proclivities, and those of nations, tribes, and long-divergent races of men, but they are somewhere resultant of personal action and history. They have grown, in their moral aspect and relations, out of the commerce of mind and truth. They are entailed states of the affections. In their nature and first formation, they result from the voluntary activities of mind. After being formed, they tend to perpetuate themselves, as all habits do; but they come into being through the action of mind, and are thus perpetuated and strengthened, or, through the



resistance of the agent, and conflict, in view of other and opposing considerations, are lessened, and done away, in a counter course of action. Propensities are not objectively and arbitrarily imposed. They lie in our concrete history, and have their birth there. In their largest sense, and utmost significance, they are to the race, what habits are to the individual. The history of any one, of either, and of its successful overthrow, gives the law of all. Does the inebriate have the drunkard's appetite, without the history in which it takes its rise, or subdue it, without successful combat with weapons drawn from the armory of truth, and without fortifying himself thus, in a course of conduct averse to his appetite and passions? Here is the law of all failure and all reform, of all wrong and all righteousness, and it combines a breadth of statement, which is equally conclusive under this, and the following head of exceptions. In strictness of speech one is not responsible for the propensities that cleave to him, whether of personal or hereditary origin, but for the sinful indulgences in which they were formed, or have been participated in, or from which they have resulted on his part, or his want of resistance to them

now, when already formed. He may, indeed, be quite praiseworthy in the midst of manifold temptations, and for manfully resisting, and overcoming a wrong propensity; he may exhibit a higher virtue than is the inheritance of him who has not been thus tempted. The relations of "*original sin*," as a theological technic, to all personal responsibility, is here seen, while the application of these thoughts to our general subject, and to the "rationale" of a moral government, will be sufficiently obvious as we come to its main issue.

3. *That propensity is the law of choice, and moral action necessitated by it.* This is, perhaps, a wider spread and more determined error than those already suggested, though in intimate alliance with them. It is the fruit of a very inadequate analysis of the mental economy, and goes far in destroying all intelligent accountability. It overlooks the independent and intrinsic nature of the influence of motives and truth, according to their sources, in meeting the intelligence—that various and conflicting motives may be before the mind, and that it chooses discretionarily between them. This position makes change of mind an impossibility, as a law of

mind, and stereotypes character and conduct, except as arbitrarily imposed through extrinsic methods, and aside from all moral responsibility. Volition, as a law of mind, is not the *necessary* result of pre-existent propensity; it may occur as a dictate of reason or conscience, and from inducements presenting themselves from that direction. Propensities to wrong are in the line of the passions, and if they *must* rule, all instruction, and exhortation, and considerations, addressed to the great principles of our constituent being are irrelevant and out of place. They could have no inherent vitality, or appropriateness, as belonging to the economy of mind, and must, if used at all, be part of an arbitrary arrangement, extrinsic to it. No intelligent agent was ever placed where he could not do right. If a change of propensity is indispensable to a change of choice, and ante-dates it, then is freedom impossible, without object, and valueless. But this mistakes the law of the rise of propensity, and of its demolition too, as well as of our responsibility respecting it, as in its nature a resultant state, and habit of mind. Propensities when formed, and as viewed in the past, are not strictly of the mind's voluntariness.

They are an accretion of its history; and their relation to it, after being formed, is that of a motive influence, existing as of themselves, and extrinsic to the proper constituency of the mind. They are like habits, and must be treated in the same way; if wrong, they must be resisted, and overcome by conflict and counteraction, through considerations drawn from reason and right, in the exercise of that self-originated *nisus*, and power of effort, which are self-conscious attributes of our personal being. One is not obliged to follow the lead of his propensities, but may resist and overcome them according to the dictates of reason and truth. There is in us this *inherent ability*; it is a constituent element of our being. On this the work of the Holy Spirit is based, in inducing right action in the soul. It is the instruction of consciousness, and is obviously essential to all intelligent and responsible action.

The three positions already referred to are cognate in their character and tendency, and they bear on the problem before us. They resolve sin into its antecedents. They displace it from that which is of the mind's conscious election and responsibility. They change a moral

to a merely physical economy. They put sin in the arrangement and under the guidance of God, and hold Him responsible for it, and its manner and amount as of His economy, and fixed and limited by His will. They make its existence a matter of divine proposition and control, as a scheme and order of things under His guidance and according to His mind. They concentrate all responsibility in the universe in God himself, constitute Him the only cause, and make the current history of sin but the transcript of His mind and will, contrary to His character and word.

I proceed to other anomalous positions in the same general category of thought :

4. *That influences "ab extra," limit the freedom of choice.* This is a misconception, under which Dr. B. labors in common with many others. Its antidote is of the mind's own consciousness, that nothing "*ab extra*" to its voluntariness is of the nature of *causation* to its acts, and that it *never* is or can be placed where it does not act electively. Intelligence must have light, and is open to it in every direction. All motive influences from objective truth, and its own past history, lie legitimately before it, and

cluster in the foreground of any existent volition. But they are there as inducements, grounds, reasons, convictions even, but they have not the nature of cause, and impinge not upon our freedom of mind. A dead man does not breathe, however vitalized the atmosphere around him. Freedom is an attribute of intelligence; it is in the nature of intelligence which, bereft of it, ceases to be intelligence. If mind act at all, it acts by an inward law which is of its own nature, whatever of motive influence in variety or of strength lies before it. The will is inherently and necessarily a voluntary faculty in respect to its acts. The mind can but be free and elective within the sphere of its responsibility. No accumulation of motive involves a *necessity* of action. The action is from another direction, and by way of development from within, through an element of the mental constitution. You cannot necessitate its acts, or plant a tendency that way. Infinity cannot. The thing is simply absurd. As well change the necessary quality of anything else, and retain its name. Can black be white, or sin otherwise than wrong, or virtue otherwise than good and lovely? All the "malignant spirits" of Pande-

monium cannot change the inherent freedom of our mental constitution, or of our executive acts. The excuses often tendered in this connection, are not that we did not act freely in the premises, but through misinformation, inexperience, or precipitation, or in some way in which the necessitated faculties of reason and conscience had not a fair opportunity, or in circumstances justifying a course of action otherwise wrong, and no way displacing that fundamental element of truth; that it is the nature of intelligence to act freely under influences from without or within, derived either from all truth or beings objective to ourselves, or from the informations, or propensities, or habits, of our own past history, and that intelligence in its executive and responsible functions, cannot be otherwise.

5. *That sin obstructs moral freedom; that depravity necessarily cramps and deranges the powers of the mind, and blunts and crushes the attributes of intelligence.* The law of habit obtains here, doubtless, as in all mental history. Accustomed action is easy and sprightly, and that which is unaccustomed the reverse. This is seen in every trade and profession,—in all depart-

ments and callings in life. But morality is nowhere an impossibility. Knaves may have great activity and sprightliness of mind. There may be superlative cunning and craft in the worst of men. The arch-deceiver has lost no attribute of intelligence by his apostasy. He is now as much bound to love God, and love Him supremely, as he ever was. If sin obstructs freedom, it lessens responsibility. If it fetters intelligence, it takes away guilt, and then comes the anomaly, "the greater the sinner, the less the sin." Physical depravity is a solecism. "Native depravity" and "original sin" are not, when these phrases are used to describe the hereditary proclivity and tendency of the race of man, since the apostasy, and do not take responsibility beyond the sphere of the personal will.

6. *That sin vests in its motive, and that the responsibility of a moral act lies in the consideration that induced it.* This form of statement, when designed to characterize the movements of the will, the voluntary action itself, is not in error. But, as generally used to describe something antecedent to it, it is. If by it is meant anything extrinsic to the mind, or that is not of its own immediate voluntariness,—if any mere result



of its past history, in the form of bias, or propensity, or predisposition, or habit, or anything which may lead to, but is not of its present consent, and voluntary indulgence, and existent personal activity,—if something which is its occasion or basis, and not itself, but is other than a description of its quality or nature; then we are misled. We have had, in the past, no responsibility in respect to our propensities or habits, but in the voluntary states and activities of mind which commenced, or have cherished and strengthened them; we have none, now, but in the consent and compliance we yield them. Present resistance to strong and exacting propensities is a virtue; and all the more in proportion to their strength, and the measure of our successful resistance. The motive, as sustained here, must be in the action, and inhere in it, as a property of it, and have the relation to it of the attribute to its subject, and then the statement meets the demand of consciousness, and the legitimate doctrines of morality. When this phraseology is used, to declare the character of a volition, and not the ground and predisposing conditions and occasion of it, it is unobjectionable; and it is with a view to locate the thing in

tended by it, within the precincts of the voluntary state of the will, instead of something not strictly of it, and to cut off this reference of sin to its antecedents, and to limit it to its appropriate place in the conscious activities of the voluntary faculty, that I have brought out thus distinctly this feature of the discussion.

The general object, under the last three topics of remark, is to concentrate responsibility at its true point,—to locate sin (and holiness too, as a counterpart) where the conscious activities of the voluntary executive faculty meet the sources and conditions of them, as found in all objective truth, in all past history and experience, in the dictates of the necessitated faculties of reason and conscience, or in the pleadings of appetite and passion. I would thus avoid those loose references of it to that which is not of the attitude, state, and act of the personal will, which tend so much to confuse the sense of accountability; which make exhortation and command meaningless and irrelevant, and throw out of their true relations those integral elements of a moral system, which are german to the whole subject before us.

7. *That God is the only efficient cause.* This

postulate enters much into the woof of many a philosophical system, and forms the basis of many a theological creed. Beyond our convictions, perhaps, and as the result of long-conceded habits of thought, our schemes of religious doctrine are strung on this cord, and derive their shape and pressure from this idea. And it is this position, as embraced in all its forms of cropping out to the surface in our systems, which is most integral in the errors here excepted to, and most effective in preventing the appropriate solution of the problem here considered. It leads us astray in almost all the corollaries we draw from it. If all that is not God, is merely an effect, containing in itself no inherent principle of causation, and all real cause resides in God; then all that is, is the legitimate result of His primordial arrangements, and is as he would have it; all is, in its historical connections according to His will, and the transcript of it. It is directly a means to the promotion of His ends, and is His own method to the attainment of those ends. It is the result of His disposing agency, and He is responsible for it, as the result of that disposing agency, and must be justified in that relation to it. All that is, is of

him, and is his way, and must be vindicated as such. His relation to sin and wrong becomes that of a proponent, and they become the best thing possible in their place, and as a part of the divine plan. Sin is then consecrated as God's own method of the universe, and He is presented in those relations of irreconcilable contrariety respecting it, which our intelligence cannot appreciate, and with which the moral sense cannot fraternize,—relations which, in every other direction of being or thought, are held as Jesuitical, uncandid, and unworthy. Reason acknowledges her incapacity to investigate the subject thus related, and we close the inquiry by resolving the divine relations to wrong into an inscrutable mystery. When God has defined His position in respect to sin, in His being and in our own,—on our physical nature and in our moral sense—on every page of His providence and word, and given it as the basis of all morality, and the first lesson of childhood; we convert it by the logical necessities of our theories into an inappreciable enigma, and throw into ineffable confusion all apprehension of the moral nature of God and of all conformity to Him. Our discharge from this solecism, and all the wide-

spread absurdities of the position above stated, is every way easy and reliable. God is the first cause, but He is not the only one. Much that He has made has in its nature as really the element of cause, as He has himself. All intelligence is cause; inherently and necessarily so, and cannot be otherwise. All that God has made "in his own image and after his likeness," is like Him in this respect, and, in its sphere, is as properly cause, as He is in His. Intelligence may be crushed, perhaps, and its life put out, if God sees best; but while it is, its very nature is that of cause, with its behests and responsibilities, and with a method and an activity all its own; and God's relations to the conduct and character of finite created intelligences in an economy of moral government must be arranged on other principles, than that He is the only efficient cause.

8. *That all things occur in some proper sense, in accordance with the mind and will of God.* This is, I am aware, but a corollary from the generic error last referred to, and is involved in the discussion of that. But it should have a distinct and significant prominence in the catalogue of those anomalous positions, which ren-

der impossible the vindication of the divine relations to wrong. The apology for this thesis is, that if it is not *true*, God is not supreme; and it would be more valid, if this were the alternative. But supremacy does not require sole existence, or sole causation, or sole origination of thought, or method, or feeling, or action. It does, in truth, take in the idea of comparison, conflict, counteraction, and distinct personalities and agencies out of which this relation arises. We do indubitably know, that all wrong things are not in accordance with the will of God, for we are so informed from reason and the Bible, and the thesis which demands a counter statement, as its logical necessity, must be in error. God is a unit. "He is of one mind, and none can turn him." He has distinctness, significance, and individuality of being—an appreciable personality, with correlated and harmonious perfections. He must have uniqueness of relations to wrong. He could not propose it, and then antagonize with it. He could not forbid what He willed. He is not double-minded. If He reveals His mind, on any one point or principle, it is His whole mind there. There is candor, and fairness, and appreciable transparency of moral

attributes in Him. If He interdicts the tree of "the knowledge of good and evil," He would not have its fruit taken; and there is no counter statement to be made on the subject. The taking of the fruit was simply disobedience to His authority, and against His will, and here is the sum of the relations of His will in the premises. He does in no sense patronize both sides of the equation, and in one attitude of the subject will wrong, and in another not will it; and the nomenclature of a "decretive will" and a "preceptive will," contradictory to, and antagonizing with each other, is simply a solecism.

9. *That the existent universe of FEELINGS and FACTS is no way otherwise than the fulfilment of a divine purpose, or that moral agency in creatures is, in its working and acts, but the transcript of the purpose of God.* This is a needless excrescence of evangelical systems of faith, and does them hurt. It is more than the truth. It is inevitable, if God is the only agent, and if all things are in accordance with his will; and it lies in the same category of error. A simple decree is without efficiency. It secures the existence of nothing. Unattended by a causal power for its execution, in the will of Him who

made it, it is impotent and valueless. It must be a cause, or find in its author the element of cause in its behalf, or it might as well not be. Decrees are mere advice, or instruction, without the power and the determination in their authors to execute them, and as such, and unrevealed, are nugatory. The purposes of a being relate directly to his own acts, and are the mental forecast and condition of what he does. Each one has a purpose, and a method of his own, which is inherent in, and a part of his own proper personality. God has His, the sinner his. They may meet in an issue common to both, and which, for different reasons and from different directions, lies in both; but they are not identical. They may invade, commingle with, and cross each other, but they are not the same. They are inherently separate, and not of each other. They are each "*sui generis*," and characteristic of the agent, whose they are. God knows what the sinner's is, but He does not make it. The sinner makes it, and it is a method and an economy diverse from God's, and antagonistic to it. As a personal method, and agency, and economy of things, it is in no sense of God, and in every sense another's. God knows what it is,



and how to conflict with it, and to prove Himself wiser than it is, being Himself in the infinite and the right, and how to bring good out of its wrong and mischief, as He could not if it were His economy, and how to circumvent, and triumph over it in the methods of His moral government; but as a personal method and agency, it is not His.

God's purposes relate to His acts, as do those of any agent. They embrace all that He does, and as He does it. And here are the great facts of the universe and all the divine works, down to the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our heads,—all that He does in correlation with other agents,—in antagonism to them, or as any way related to them. To suppose that He purposes the purposes of other agents, so that their feelings, and thoughts, and acts, and plans, and methods, are but a transcript of His, is but a needless assumption, and, in the last analysis, an obvious solecism. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Every agent has his own meth-

od, and characteristic "*nisus*" of effort, and moral aim, which are his and his exclusively. God in His, has in view those of all other agents, so far as they commingle in the history and results of the universe, and is in circumspection of them, but not in identity with them. The foolishness of God may be wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men, but certainly not the same with them. He needs but a knowledge of the purposes of others, to take His course in relation to them. To make them but a *transcript* of His, would take all meaning out of a sovereign and righteous providence, in relation to them. It would dramatize the universe, and absorb all vitality from a moral system.

Let us take this matter a little further into detail. All sin lies in a purpose. It is the purpose and method, and voluntary state of a sinning agent, possessing the attributes and responsibilities of intelligent cause, as the Bible, and reason, and common sense, and conscience aver, and is against the will, and law, and authority, and supremacy of God, and derogatory to His glory and the good of the universe. But is it God's method too? Is there a harmony of plan

and purpose between God and the sinner in this? Is sinning but fulfilling, in some sense, the will of God, and carrying out *His* way of things? Are all the wrongs and woes of earth but the accomplishment of God's primordial arrangements, as an economy for a universe? Is there just as much sin, and strife, and lust, and blaspheming of God, as God would have, and just as much of that abominable thing which God hates, as he has ordained, and sees to be good? Must we get on so? Is this the gist and genius of a moral system? Is this the scale and cast of a divine morality, and must I contemplate God in this attitude to sin and wrong? Every sentiment of our moral nature revolts at it. Nor is it any way needful in the conducting of a moral government. There is a logical absurdity in such an issue, as well as a moral impossibility. Results over mind are never reached in this way. It is not the method of a moral government. We never seek to influence others thus, and, through such an arrangement, gain our ends from them. We do not purpose their purposes, or invade the proper precincts of their personality, but knowing, as far as may be, their state and susceptibilities, we present the

grounds of the course we would have them pursue, and strive, in an economy all our own, and distinct from theirs, to influence them in the desired direction. This is the law of mind at this point; of all mind. It is of the very nature of all moral government, and all moral responsibility.

10. *That a divine purpose in any one event, implies a divine INSTITUTION of all that precedes or is in any way connected with it.* Why is this needful? As God is not the only cause, all that is is not His work. As He is omniscient, He knows all that is, or will be, at the hands of other agents, and can wisely meet it in His own purposes and work. Infinite wisdom is a divine attribute. God may know that which he does not purpose. Indeed, he must know in order to purpose, and purpose wisely, as all agents must. The primordial elements of all wisdom and knowledge are ever with the Deity. An ever-perfect intuition of all that is, or will, or can be, is of the nature of God, and He has all the resources found in this, to influence or overmatch other agents, and secure, in the unequal conflict, in some way, His great end in all His works.

But there is much in the finite in which he

has no share and no complicity. There is much of plan, and method, and spirit, and feeling, and act, that is in no sense His; much with which he is offended, and by which He is dishonored, and that he disowns, repudiates, and abhors. He may bring good out of evil, and order out of confusion; but that evil and that confusion are not His. His purposes are like Himself, and descriptive of Him. He will not take a wrong method, or prejudice morality by inappreciable relations to wrong. He does what is worthy of Him, as one infinitely good and holy, and purposes what He does. He may take advantage of the wicked designs, and machinations, and plottings of evil agents, in bringing about His good ends, as in the sojourn in Egypt, and the sacrifice of Christ, and as any good agent may, within his sphere; but those designs and machinations are not His, or His device. To their authors they belong exclusively, while He, by an ever-watchful, antagonizing, overruling providence, may disarm them of their mischief, or make them unwittingly the occasion of the accomplishment of His good and glorious purposes. Analogies to this we have everywhere. Must the statesman plan the diplomacy of his adver-

sary in order to overthrow it? Is the perfection of wisdom seen in conducting what is merely one's own plan of things? Is it not in encountering the strategy of other agents, in thwarting their plans, and succeeding in our own, though abreast of the utmost strength of all antagonism, that we acknowledge the perfection of earthly wisdom? Civil government would be a very tame affair, if all cause and wisdom lay in one head and in one direction. The Bible freely locates the wisdom of God in the same categories of thought with that of other agents. It is on the field of companionship or of conflict, of correlation or antagonism. In relation to sin, it is on the side of an uncompromising hostility. It is God and all good beings in all good methods, antagonizing with the principle of evil and the spirit of wrong; taking the best way in preventing, remedying, limiting it, and coming down upon that which may not be otherwise overcome, in the form, eventually, of a coercive retribution. But change the view, and make the thing combated but the thing ordained, and you work confusion in the being and work of God not only, but you take the life of a moral system.

11. *That God could not be happy unless all is, on the whole, as he would have it.* Dr. B. stumbles at this point, and, while he accounts for sin in the incapacity of creatures to comprehend God in the earlier stages of creation, in a process of equally infelicitous reasoning he considers God as "intensely unhappy" in view of the juncture thus occasioned, and until there shall be time for His eventual vindication. Our accustomed theories are the apology of the issue here joined, and this is perhaps as good an exposition as can be given, on the basis of them. It is this, or utter mystery. If sin is God's method, it must be according to His will, and then we are betrayed into some exegesis of it, as such. We confidently say, if God is supreme, will He not have His own way always, and have all His desires gratified? Will not *His will* be in all respects always accomplished, and if not, must He not be supremely unhappy? The reasoning, as bearing on *actual truth*, is fallacious, though originating in so commanding an apology. The happiness of an intelligent being depends more on the inward sphere, than on that which is outward. Do right, and your happiness is on an immovable basis; its law is that it abides chiefly

in your own keeping. God's happiness may be about as dependent on the actualities in creation, as on the fact of it, at all. He doubtless desires all righteousness intensely, and hates all unrighteousness perfectly. He has sentiments of justice and compassion over sin and sinners, and exercises a righteous sovereignty in the premises. But these sentiments are not in their exercise unhappy. So in respect to all the relations of God to wrong. The hinge of the question is just here. If God's relations to wrong are right, that wrong cannot disturb His peace. But what are the facts? Is sin according to the will of God, and are all things as He would have them? Was not the prohibition in the garden the exponent of the divine will in the matter, and was it responded to and accomplished? Did the desecrations of the antediluvian era meet the mind of God? Why then the flood? Does he not "will that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth?" But will they? Are the blasphemies of earth and hell as he would have them? Why then the ensigns of wrath and the foreshowings of retribution? Does this world present a picture that He likes? Why then the scourges of His wrath?



Why are His repentings enkindled within Him, and why His yearning lamentations, "Oh! that they were wise!" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim, how shall I deliver thee, Israel?" But does it follow, that the foundations of God's peace and happiness are moved by all this, if His relations to it are right? Infinitely less, surely, if this is not according to His will, than if it is. The one relation would be fatal to all peace of mind in the Deity, or any one else; the other admits of all the right affections, and benevolent sympathies, and holy energies of will, which go to make up the blessedness of God. With right relations to it, in the Deity, I ask again, may we suppose that disturbances in the finite shall mar His peace? Is His happiness thus in the hands of creatures, and at the mercy of their imperfections and sins, and habits of change? If so, to be sure of it, He must annihilate created intelligences, and make character and destiny, and praise and worship, and love and obedience, and bliss, impossible in the finite, and forego all the purposes which give value to the universe, and which make it better as a reality than as a conception.

There are two sources of happiness in intelli-

gent beings, that, and every way the less, from the gratification of the sensibilities and the desires; the other, and by far the greatest, in the exercise of benevolent affections, and the energies of a righteous will.\* The one in its extreme, is the drugged child, calling for the gratification of its appetites, and passions; the other, the unselfish Howard, everywhere on errands of mercy and sustaining right. A good being may be happy though all his wishes are not complied with, or all his sensibilities gratified. He may see wrong in others, and wretchedness, and commiserate them, and yet be happy in himself. If all his relations to that wrong and wretchedness are those of a good and benevolent being, he will have a well-spring of happiness within, which that wrong and wretchedness will not interrupt, but which will flow forth in refreshing and glad exercise on that wretchedness itself.

God's happiness is from within Himself. It flows from what He is, and what He does, in infinite righteousness and excellency, and is not in the keeping, or dependent on the conduct, of creatures. He, doubtless, wishes their right action,

\* See President Hopkins' Baccalaureate Sermon. Wms. Col., 1852.

and is gratified and honored in their obedience, and love, and praise. He says this. He is offended with the wicked, and sees in their sins, and wrongs, and mischief, that which He utterly hates and abhors; and yet He is happy. The deep and everlasting fountains of His peace, and blessedness, are not moved by the outbreak of sin in the finite, and especially as it is not His method, and as He stands related to it, in the way of all righteousness, goodness, and truth, and from the resources of the infinite, is benevolently taking the best way in its prevention, limitation, remedy, and punishment, and in delivering the universe from its blighting curse. Doing this, He cannot but be happy,—happy, indeed, in His mercy over the miserable, and in His grace toward the fallen and sinful. Any intelligence would be, thus related, and thus employed, in the infinite or finite. Test this on the smallest scale. You cannot benevolently relieve one pang of a fallen being—lift the eye of one smitten sinner to the cross. Ah, indeed, lift your foot from the worm in your path, without its sending a thrill of comfort and satisfaction to your bosom. It is the rightness and energies of the interior sphere, which gauge the happi-

ness of an intelligent being. If sin were God's method of the universe, and sin and wrong were here by His will, He might well be unhappy about it, and its ravages, and find it to undermine the very foundations of His character and blessedness. But, if as a method and a fact, it be in the finite, and against the infinite and the right, and if all God's relations to it are righteousness and truth, sustained by all the resources of His being, He may be perfectly happy notwithstanding it. Is not the physician happy in relieving the pains of his patient? Or the judge self-sustained in pronouncing the sentence of offended law and right, though benevolent sympathies cluster in his heart? Our position here is manifestly in the sunlight of truth, and needs no further development, and it has the thought which runs integrally through our whole subject.

12. *That the universe, as a whole, and with all its moral relations, is nevertheless but as a physical fact.* This error is intimately allied to those already suggested. It will scarcely be acknowledged in form, and yet, thereby, is not its force and disastrous influence much abated? It enters by concession into the woof of whole systems of thought on this subject, and prevents a just and

adequate impression of the appropriate features and demands of a moral economy of being. It reduces all the agencies of the universe to the simple element of power, as a physical force, and the universe itself to a merely physical unit. It finds expression in phraseology like this: "If God did not want sin why not prevent it?" "If it be not in some sense according to His will, why not exclude it?" "If not existing by, and according to His decree, how does it exist at all?" "Does not God permit all the sin and wrong that exist?" "Is there not just as much sin and wrong in the universe as God sees will promote His glory and turn to His account?" The "Princeton Review" (for January, 1854, pages 137-8) goes so far as to concentrate the perfections of the Deity at this point in the simple element of a physical almightiness, and to scout in this relation the idea of "moral power" as a principle of divine government. It includes sin and wrong among the all-things which are just as God would have them, unappreciable and revolting to the moral sense as this sentiment must be, and says that "a *blind, absolute* submission to it is the first and most indispensable condition of piety,"—"the submis-

sion of intellect and conscience" to the terms of this category—"the submission of a sightless child;" and that this is "the only safe-guard from scepticism," and that, "as we must end here, we may as well begin here." Thus it strikes out, at a blow, all use of reason in this matter,—all investigation of the perfections of God,—all the dictates of conscience as to the divine relations to wrong, and all inquiry, as related to it, into the character of the works and ways of Him who has illustrated himself in all He has done in nature and providence, and in the full volume of his written revelation.

This position is taken, notwithstanding the language of God, even to rebellious man, "Come now and let us reason together," and, in infinite condescension and love, challenging of us the conclusion, "Are not my ways equal, and are not your ways unequal?" But this is the drift of the physical theory; it is its necessity. It begins with ignoring "reason and conscience," and ends with making religion and morality the mere prescription of One, whose being and relations are an enigma, and whose perfections we cannot appreciate. All this, however, is the wrong side of truth;—a method of conception

which throws an inverted image; a disastrous shade upon the canvas, and despoils every feature of the matters delineated there. The great error is, in not regarding the nature of intelligence, and of moral government, and not seeing what is appropriate to it, and what cannot belong to, or be of it. Matter has its laws, and so has mind. Some things can be done in respect to mind, and some cannot. It has a nature of its own, and if it exist at all, it must exist with that nature. You would not treat a wounded conscience as you would a broken limb, or prevent sin as you would an earthquake. The laws and relations of moral government are *sui generis*. Physical power is not in place there, surely not primarily and chiefly. You may incarcerate a man, but his mind will be free, and his will and affections rove through creation. Moral government respects moral relations, and is in view of them. It takes in the idea of ruler and ruled,—of obligatory truth and virtue,—of right and wrong,—of character and destiny. It is correlated with duty, willing obedience, love, and all righteousness. Its methods of reaching results is different from that of simple power. It has to do with the intelligence, and must it-

self be intelligent, and of a nature suited to influence mind. It could not be, but on laws inherently its own. And moral government you must have where God is, and creatures made in his image. And such creatures he will have as the crowning feature of his works, and that, below which, and for which in the finite all else is. God is a power in the direction of his own intelligence, and intelligence in the created is the perfection of being there. It is just that which is in the image and after the likeness of God.

13. *That the present is a CHOICE of systems,*—is the one, on the whole, best,—is the one which, notwithstanding the friction of sin, &c., is better than any other that might have taken its place, and that God selected this as being comparatively the desirable one. This mistakes the methods of the Infinite, and overlooks entirely what, in this respect, belongs to God. The Infinite mind does not work on the scale of comparisons between more and less. God is not so necessitated. This is the method of the finite and imperfect. Created mind, growing in knowledge, comes to conclusions, and forms plans, and conducts processes thus. God's way is absolutely perfect, inherently and necessarily so, and like



Himself. His forthgoings are from eternity. His infinite wisdom is a perfection of His being, and has its expression in no balancing of various, and it may be, conflicting lines of operation. God is not thus under law to the finite, and thus conditioned and circumstanced in respect to what he plans and does. "His work is perfect," and we should not thus mingle the characteristics of the finite and imperfect in the purpose and work of God. He has but one way and one method, and that is inherent in all righteousness and perfection, and in every respect characteristic of Himself. His conceptions, His purposes, His ends, and agency, are from the inward sphere of His being, and of it, and like it. No imperfection adheres to them, no improvement of them is conceivable, or possible. They possess the attributes of the absolute. If God's work is not perfect it is unworthy of Him. If it is a balancing of expedients, its author is conditioned and in the finite. But "God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very, (Hebrew superlative,) perfectly good." Intelligence, in *His own image* and after *His likeness*, was its crowning feature and design. Creatures in His image, with

whom to have correspondence, and who should appreciate and love Him, and manifest His glory, was its significant feature, and ultimate ground and consummation; and what better could there be? What better than intelligence like God's can there be in the finite, and its accommodation and opportunities of development in the orders of creatures and things below? Nothing better is conceivable,—nothing less can be from the absolute as a totality. Limitation, or imperfection, or wrong, dwell not with the Infinite, or His methods or ways. You must seek them in other agencies than His; under other auspices and patronage, and through that apostasy in the finite in which is nothing of God. And the caution in place here is that we avoid the sphere of the finite in describing the thoughts and works of the Infinite.

14. *That the relations of time apply to God, and that all things are so foreordained of God as to FORESTALL and LIMIT the idea of a CURRENT, DISCRETIONARY PROVIDENCE.* Few, it may be, would adhere to this statement, *totidem verbis*. Still, the line of thought and reasoning, pursued by many, is very much that which it indicates, and the effect is to emasculate of all meaning the

present intelligence of God's doings, and to take all vitality out of his passing providence. That providence is thus made but the dependent echo of a plan formed in the eternity past, and the leaden carrying out of a programme as old as the years of God. But what are time and space, relatively, to the Infinite, and what significance have they, as applied to Him? What is there in His being but the present? What in His thoughts or plans but an ever-present intelligence and discretion in respect to whatever is, and as it is? We deceive ourselves when we throw all the purposes of God into a past eternity, and then make it the province of a working and extant universe, merely to move in the grooves then cut, and feel obliged, moreover, to find in that programme the method, and arrangement and fact of all sin and wrong. God is always in the present. "One day is with Him as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." He is no older now than when creation was announced; He never will be older than He always was. The thoughts of a past eternity are the thoughts of to-day. The plans and purposes of a past eternity are but the present plans and purposes of His all-wise, discretionary

intelligence, and all His relations to the finite are that of a current provision for its existent history and exigencies. If succession there be in the thoughts and acts of God, they have not, as referable to Him, the relations of time. Nothing is gained by moving back the wisdom and discretion of God, in His relations to moral government, to a by-gone eternity. That discretion would not thus be antedated at all. Divine intelligence will stand related to its acts, as the mental condition of them, the same as other agents do to theirs. God purposes what he does. But all is in the present—eternally in the present, to apprehend and to execute—to govern and to bring out the issues of moral government, by an ever-originating and an ever-present, infinite wisdom and intelligence. Hence, the prohibition to Adam was as natural and as inherently fit and intelligible, as that of an earthly parent to his child. It should not be overridden or abated by our impressions of the Divine foresight in the matter, or in its results. The term, foreknowledge, is rather in accommodation to our methods of apprehension, than in direct description of the verities referred to, as an actually-existing order in the Divine mind.

God sees things as they are, and in the order in which they are; and, as connected with their appropriate causes, and in their appropriate relations, brings to them the ever-present wisdom of His infinite mind. Especially is this so within the sphere of moral government, and the due appreciation of this is of much use in contemplating His relations to sin.

15. *That the work of the Holy Ghost, in securing right affections and action in the soul of man, is in the way of the SUPPLY OF POWER.* This position is cognate to the doctrine that God is the only cause, and may well fall with it. Its method is, that sin mars the powers of the soul, and incapacitates it for its constituent affections. It loses sight of the inherent properties of the will, and the essential prerequisites of accountability. It erects into a metaphysical formula of Occidental philosophy the popular dialect of the East and of common life, on this subject, and then outrages first principles of all truth in its interpretation of Christian doctrine. He who has but one hand, is now responsible for the use of but one, with whatever wickedness he may have separated the other from his body. He is justly chargeable with the sin of his previous

misdoing, but has now only the current responsibility of his present power. We reason so on all subjects but that of religion, and that of right forms no exception. Capacity is the measure of accountability. What I cannot do, I may not be charged to do. I must be held responsible for such truth as I can understand, and such righteousness as is in my power. I must serve God with such faculties as I have.

This, moreover, is the teaching of the moral sense. We innately feel the appositeness of the inspired aphorism: "It is accepted of a man, according to that he hath, and not according to that he hath not." Why excuse ourselves from removing mountains or raising the dead? Why not assume the duties of Gabriel? What is the doctrine of the common or statute law, and what of every-day life? We run into solecisms and absurdity, on every hand, if we may not limit duty to the line of our capabilities.

But if the Spirit's office is the *supply* of power, it is in *abatement* of responsibility. If its ministry is for the increase or enlargement of my faculties, then it comes for that which was not within the sphere of my duties. But the Spirit comes to influence me to the discharge of

duty, to secure in me that which is spiritually right, and according to the will of God; that which is in itself right, and which I ought to do because it is so, and from the constituent powers of my being, and which I ought to do, irrespectively of the spirit, and whether the spirit is given or not. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," and all the virtues of the Christian life. Are not these duties? are they not inherently right affections? and was one ever placed where he could not do right? Are not repentance, faith, love, and worship, and all the duties of morality and piety, charged on man, as man, being a sinner? Can you charge them on the brute, or the idiot? and why not?

Besides, if the will is not inherently free, no supply of power can make it so. If it move not in the element of its own freedom, it is a necessitated faculty, and not responsible for its acts. Its acts are according to its nature as a faculty, and if that is not essential freedom, no improvement of it can make it so. Its acts are necessitated like the decisions of the understanding, or the feelings of the sensibility.

But duty lies in the sphere of the will. All exhortation and appeal go there, and all the re-

sults of light in the understanding, or sensibility in the conscience, are referred there, and thence proceed all the fruits of our elective and responsible agency. But for this there could not be trial, duty, or accountability, or character, or destiny. The other faculties are preliminary to these issues, but do not directly constitute and enact them. Thus the question of power is not properly in place here, as the will is essentially free and elective. One can *will anything*, and if he does not, it is for other reasons than want of power. And thus the office work of the Holy Spirit in the regeneration and sanctification of men, would be out of place, and would come short of its object, if given for the supply of power. When that was supplied, and a man was thus made capable of duty, who would guarantee that he would do it? Men *do* not always all they can—they never do, perhaps. Power might thus be supplied, and yet never used. It might be given to every man “to profit withal,” and yet every man prove recreant to it. Much is done for us that we turn false to, or never improve; and if the work of the Spirit is the supply of power, it might all be expended, and yet not a soul be saved. Power com-



municated might lie dormant, as very much of that power which is confessedly inherent doubtless does. No, we want the Spirit to influence aright the power we have, and to secure in us action and character, commensurate with our abilities,—to “convince” and persuade as in the Bible,—to incline and lead us on to all righteousness, on principles and through laws of influence which are consistent with the nature and freedom of the will.

We need it, not to superinduce that upon us, which is otherwise impossible, but to induce and secure that which is all within the proper sphere of our own abilities and duty, and which, as such, we ought to do from the very laws and principles of our own intelligence. The fruit of the Spirit is just that which is intelligently required of us. “It is love, joy, peace, long-suffering,” and all the Christian graces; and these are precisely our free acts and duties. They are repentance, and faith, and all right states and acts of will; and when a man under the influence of the Spirit, does freely repent of sin and trust in Christ, he is regenerated and born of the Spirit. And when he thus becomes penitent and believing he is in a regenerated state, and

not before. He is then new-born, and not till then,—he is then a new creature through the effectual operation of the Holy Ghost, and has new spiritual relations to God and all else. The new birth is not an enigma. Its philosophy is the philosophy of all change of mind, and spiritual state. Its law is that of any right affection and holy state. “Every one that loveth is *born* of God.” Gracious affections are the evidence and the method of it. It is a right voluntary state, and action of will, induced by the Holy Ghost. It is the Spirit of God in our voluntariness, and within the sphere thereof; securing legitimate and required action in view of the truth. This is not anomalous. We are open to influences which are not of our constituent being, and it is the nature of our executive faculty to act freely and responsibly, under and in view of them. They are in their nature resistible, but they may be effectual, just as the Holy Ghost, in the matter of conviction and conversion, is often resisted and by some “always,” but not by all; and those who yield, yield intelligently and freely, and in the best exercise of the constituent elements of their being. The work of the Spirit is coördinate with the truth. We are

conscious of it only as lying in the truth, and a legitimate influence of it. It is God himself in and with his word, for right action in the soul. It is a superadded economy to the ordinary resources of right action, all in the grace of God. It is not in abatement of responsibility or in supply of power, but a coöperative agency with and for the truth and its Author, for securing right action in sinful men, and turning them, in accordance with the laws of all intelligence and within the sphere of their faculties, "from the error of their ways to the wisdom of the just."

The terms *natural* and *moral* necessity have crept unhappily into our philosophy of this subject, as they bring up an idea, not in place in analysing the functions of the will. A more appropriate distinction is, in view of its subjective basis, into the *necessitated* and *voluntary* elements of our being;—*reason* and the *sensibilities*, and of course the *conscience*, necessitated in their acts, and the *will* free,—inherently free and capable up to the limits of all duty and right. Then, first principles in the moral sense are complied with,—all law, and command, and exhortation, and inducements to right action, in the way of motive influence, and all dissuasion

and inhibition of all wrong, are seen to be inherently in place. The mind intelligently grasps the idea, that all disobedience is sin, because avoidable, and all duty and right action reasonable, because within the sphere and legitimate province of the will. I turn to but one error more, in the foreground of this discussion, and as germane to its direct and principal issue.

16. *That happiness is end in moral government.* This position fails utterly within the sphere of morality. It is not God's end, in that sphere, and cannot be the law and ultimate rule of a moral universe. The phrases "highest happiness" and "highest good" are not synonyms, and no necessary correlates. Our good it may be, under some circumstances, and in some connections, not to be happy. Happiness correlates more with our merely sentient nature, and is an end in respect to the irresponsible orders of being. It can be taken up into the service of moral government only as a means. It may have a ministry there, as with the ox or the horse, but it is a humble one. It is a method only, and has its sphere in the other and lower sensibilities, and not in the conscience. Where conscience is most obtuse, this ministry has

the largest prerogative. A Chinese mandarin may receive his stripes, for malfeasance, and return to his standing and self-respect, as aforetime. But this could not be in enlightened, Christian communities. Punishment *there* received is itself a humility and a degradation, and the acceptance of rewards for right action is accounted an unworthiness. Would you be paid for kindness, or set a price on virtue? Would you barter character for gold, and set a marketable estimate on your own dishonor? The thought is only preposterous.

The "greatest good" in intelligent personality, is *rectitude of spirit*, a personal, spiritual excellency, such as God has, and such as he has made, to be the behest of our constituent, moral being. This is *ultimate end* in intelligent beings, and in moral government. It is not a good as a means, but a good in itself; in its own right, and of its own behest, the "highest good." It is *characteristically* the highest good of an intelligent being, and his highest, ultimate end. This end is in a complete and perfect rectitude, seen in the ground of the personal spirit, whether in the Infinite or finite. Happiness is incidental and coincident with such

a state, for how can an intelligent, self-conscious, responsible being be happy against his conscience, and in the wrong? This is the relation of happiness to the highest good, and the ultimate end. It is used as a means, and is related as an incident. It is never an ultimate end, or to be directly sought as an end within the precincts of morality and virtue. This is not the method or relation of it, in that sphere. Seek it as such, and you fail of it. Make it the direct and ultimate object of the mind, and you lose it. Do right because it is right, and let the comfort of it be incidental to right action, and lie in the nature of it, and your "peace shall be as a river." The good of a right spirit is in it, "*per se*," and not as a means. It is in its perfect rectitude, and conformity to all rectitude. Is the end of piety self-love? Do we reverence, worship, and obey God simply because it makes us feel happy? Do we honor a parent only or directly, as it is a means of enjoyment to ourselves, or is an economical method in society? Are all piety, and filial love, and right affections, a commodity only, and to be estimated by their commercial value, like a bale of cotton, or an acre of land? The least righteousness finds no

equivalent in any amount of happiness with which it may be compared, and for which it may be exchanged. It would be like comparing the quality of brightness to a pound of lead. The two things are not thus correlates. The end of an act of kindness must be characteristically in the act, and intrinsically of the kindness, and not arise out of any other consideration. It is integrally in it. Remove it thence and you extract all virtue from the act, and take its moral life. The act must honestly be what it represents itself to be ; a pure regard for another,—a self-sacrificing, benevolent regard. If the happiness of its author be the end of the act, it is hypocritical and false. Its end does not represent it, and is not what the kindness would show itself to be ; and the common sense and moral convictions of man would write it as fictitious and unworthy. Our end must be in and of our morality. The highest interests of the sentient nature may be coincident with all righteousness. This would be expected from the unity and perfections of God. The lower nature shall subserve the higher, and nature itself be the ministering handmaid of all righteousness. But you invert the order when you

make happiness your ultimate end, and thus pursue the behests of the higher nature for the sake of the lower, and, as God has constituted us, fail in both. Let happiness be incidental to, and not the subject matter of, the direct, ultimate aim, and it will be an attendant on that perfectness of spirit and righteousness, which are legitimate end, and which are seen in the ground of the Spirit's own rectitude and excellency. One should always act conscientiously. His rule is in himself and must be, and it is not a calculation of expedients, but a spiritual imperative, which is of his constituent, moral nature, in the right of his intelligence, as one made in the image of God. The ultimate analysis of the rule, in common language, is *conscience*, and it is at once simple and universal, and comprehensive in its law, of all intelligence. It may be misinformed. It should have a fair opportunity for its legitimate dictates, but it is of necessity the ultimate appeal.

Rectitude is end in the Infinite as well as finite. God is not good and perfect for some further and more ultimate reason. To be thus good and perfect, is itself the highest good, seen in the ground of his own intelligence. To in-



quire why this perfect rectitude is highest good and ultimate end in moral government, is like inquiring why *God is*, and like supposing there is some end beyond the ultimate end. It is like supposing that there is something better than perfectness, and more ultimate than that which is the best possible, and, as such, the greatest good, and which as such, in this respect, falls into the category of all first-truths, and all knowledge. Thus in harmony with all indubitable truth, the Bible uses the principles and economy of the sentient nature for the sake of the spiritual. Its appeals to the sensibilities are for the rectitude of the spirit. It treats of rewards and punishments, as the adjutant means of right character, and not as its end; while it rests in all rectitude of character and all conformity to righteousness, as resultant of all means, and as an ultimate idea and mode of being. "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect,"—and the consideration which is here presented is likeness to God. The Apostle Paul abounds in statements corroborating the general view here taken, and emphatically describing it. Take, as an instance of it, the comprehensive passage of Phil. iv. 8 :

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are *true*, whatsoever things are *honest*, whatsoever things are *just*, whatsoever things are *pure*, whatsoever things are *lovely*, whatsoever things are of *good report*; if there be any *virtue* and if there be any *praise*, think on these things.” Thus the Apostle finds the essence and sum of virtue in that which is characteristically of the nature of all morality, and locates there in the *true*, the *honest*, the *just*, and the *pure*, &c., the end of moral action. “The end of the commandment is *love*, out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.” With this harmonize the being and method of God. His work is perfect. His way is resultant of the spiritual imperatives of his being, and is perfect in all righteousness. It shall be for the protection of all righteousness and the discomfiture of all sin. Moral rectitude is the nature of the Deity, and his end in moral government. It is the highest good in that government. Incidental thereto and coincident therewith, and as a quality thereof, are the best interests of the sentient nature of finite intelligence. So that the prophetic aphorism is of the nature of a universal first-truth of reason, and of God. “Say

ye to the righteous it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him." With this accords the summing up in the parable which is so much the basis of reference in our whole discussion. When "all that offends and them that do iniquity are gathered out of the kingdom of God, and cast into a furnace of fire," "then shall the *righteous* shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The question of greatest happiness, regarded as an end, is irrelevant in a moral system. It is not the greatest good *there*. To increase it at the expense of rectitude, if that were possible to the Infinite, would be an evil. To inaugurate an economy of wrong in the end of happiness, would be, at once, itself wrong, as well as solecistic and suicidal.

Whether the outbreak of sin will give opportunity for greater happiness in the system than otherwise would be, may not be argued from the fact that it has occurred. Much is that had better not be, and that God has not authorized, and prefers should not be. Means and methods have character in the Infinite as well as in the

finite. No repudiated and Jesuitical method may be attributed to God. Truth and righteousness are the measure of the Deity. His whole being and forthgoing are there. Principles lie inherent in the nature and relations of all intelligence. And whether in an actually existent universe, founded necessarily by its Author, in all eternally right principles, He will, in His wisdom, eventually turn everything to account, and in such ways bring good out of evil, as that the universe shall not, by reason of the ingress of sin, suffer loss, on the whole, in its character, moral worth, and highest good, may be inferential of the sufficiency of God in bringing good out of evil; but the terms of such an inference must preclude sin from being the method of the Deity, and give His relations to it as wholly those of him who takes advantage of another's wrong in bringing forth instruction and benefit. It must be through the recuperative energies of a legitimate and perfect economy, at whose head God is. It must be an out and out antagonism and resistance of wrong on His part, with no divine proposition of its being, and no divine consent, or complicity in its behalf, such as would be implied in its being in

accordance with the eternal counsels and "decretive will" of God.

Such an authorship of an economy of wrong, and such a patronage of it, would vitiate the divine relations to it,—would annihilate the character of God, and sap the foundations of virtue.

#### DIRECT DISCUSSION—GENERAL STATEMENT.

I arrest at this point the consideration of the list of errors which lie most integrally in the way of an appropriate and adequate comprehension of our subject. If I have been successful in disengaging the truth from their mischievous adumbrations, our way is open and direct to the investigation of our subject on principles which are satisfactory to reason and the moral sense, and which are in accordance with the analogies of all truth, both in its philosophical idea and in its concrete and historic expression. Let but these anomalous positions be revised, and adjusted to the terms of a legitimate and much-needed philosophy, and the problem before us is easily solved and within the sphere of humanity. Little more is needful than to follow out the leadings of the providence and Word of God in their concurrent and uniform testi-

mony, in coincidence with the first truths of reason and the moral sense. A valid and satisfactory theology will crystallize around the simple facts and statements of the case. These will show God's relations to sin, and justify them to all principles of "honor and right,"—that those relations are unique, and characteristic, and antagonistic to sin, and in the line of virtue,—that sin is not a divine method or expedient,—that in its inception, progress and fruits, it is not of God,—that as a method and a fact it exists solely in the finite, and through apostasy, and against the will of God, and that God holds Himself, or may be justly held, no way responsible for it, or its mischiefs, save in the exercise of Infinite wisdom to prevent and limit,—to remedy and punish it, and free and secure the universe from its prevalence and ravages, and draw instruction from it, to the encouragement and benefit of His own perfect way. This is His own testimony as well as the necessary and irrepressible deductions of reason, and may not be easily gainsaid.

We wrong God, sometimes, and those moral convictions which he has given us, by our metaphysics. We first bring sin into the plan, and primordial arrangements, and purpose of God,

and install it as the divine method of the universe, and then are at our *wit's end* to settle its relations there, and justify God in the premises. We emasculate the terms we use, we resort to dexterous and extravagant definitions, and yet, dissatisfied after all, and finding all our attempts, on this theory, utterly unavailing, we yield in despair, and resolve the Divine relations to wrong into an inscrutable mystery. That which reason and our moral convictions affirm of God, we malign and prejudice by our assumptions. We affirm a theory of sin, which, if it were possible in itself, and did not run into undeniable absurdity, makes the goodness of God an impossibility, and then, in defiance of it, strive to retain our innate convictions, and to reassure ourselves that in some inappreciable way *God is good*, in despite of our theologizing. Yes, we go further. Buttressing ourselves upon the positions already controverted, we ignore any attempt at appreciating the Divine relations to sin. We say that it must lead to inevitable "scepticism;" that religion demands here a "blind, sightless faith;" and that such a faith is the only "safeguard and protection of piety;"\* and all

\*See Princeton Repertory, Jan. 1854.

this on a subject of the most practical nature and bearing, chiming in, indissolubly, with all morality and virtue, and after God has written us a volume in explanation of His relations to wrong, and has given that explanation, too, in His being and in our own.

The great effort has always been to find some good and justifiable reason for the existence of sin; one that would justify God for introducing it into His system, for resorting to it as an ingredient in His economy of things, and making it His method of the universe. All metaphysics have been put to the rack to make out this case; and when this has been found impossible, then the resort has been to solecism and "blind faith," rather than to a surrender of the dogma. Men will insist that sin is by the appointment, and according to the will of God, and as He would have it, though every page of His Word revolts at the position, and every law of being and truth. In that effort has lain the fundamental error, and, as might be expected, it has always been a failure. No such reason does, or can exist. It is denied by the very terms and nature of the subject matter of which it is here affirmed. Can there be a good and righteous



reason for wrong? Sin is of right nowhere. God disowns it, and has always, and always will, and takes a perfect method against it, as might be assumed of Him as an infinitely perfect and good being. All goodness says it is not in me, or of me. It is outlawed everywhere except in the bosoms of those whose property and wrong it is. Yes, and *there* it has not the indorsement of conscience. Even wicked men will frame excuses about it, and resort to every subterfuge and evasion, rather than own and confess it. God's plans, and purposes, and great end in all things, are opposed to it. He fellowships it neither as a method, nor an actuality, but holds it every way and everywhere as "*wholly a wrong seed.*" Its philosophy in this world or any other, is in the parable of the tares of the field, seen in its principle and exegesis, as given (Matt. 13) from the lips of one who knew. Its law and solution are *there*, and the great truths in the premises.

But the more methodical statement of the principles and first truths of reason recognized in the parable, and the more comprehensive solution of the problem now under consideration,

may be presented under the following heads of thought :

- I. *Sin cannot be of God, or be a Divine method.*
- II. *It is accounted for in personal, finite cause.*
- III. *The attributes of moral government admit the known facts of the intelligent universe, and determine the method of the Divine control and supremacy over sin.*
- IV. *The dictates of the moral sense—and of common sense.*
- V. *The concurrent testimony of the Bible.*

## CHAPTER III.

### SIN NOT A DIVINE METHOD.

**A**N absolute perfectness is the attribute of the Infinite. It discards all imperfection, and wrong, in its method. "Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with thee." The Infinite is unconstrained, and unalloyed in a perfect way. It comes not to its conclusions by way of comparison. It deliberates not between the advantages of different and conflicting possible systems. Its economy is not properly the *best possible*, but the one *absolutely perfect*. God is not limited to a choice of evils in His plan of things. He strikes no balance-sheet in His economy of the universe. He is a power in the direction of His own perfections. His operation is a spontaneity and not a calculation. His plan and purpose are like and of Himself. His economy of things is a divine and perfect manifestation. It is not

one of mutual compensations. It could not be. The mind of the all-perfect Infinite could not work thus. His sphere is that of an intrinsic rightness without alloy. His being, and work, and *economy* of work, are that of an absolute and uncompromising perfection.

But sin and wrong are not intrinsic, unalloyed good. They are not inherently and absolutely perfect. They would be taken in, and deferred to by a first-cause, but from the necessities of the case. They would not be a spontaneity in the heart of God; and otherwise how could they be of Him at all! They must be the way of an imperfect, limited being, who could do no better or get no better system, and was driven to it by a choice of evils. Sin would not, by a good being, be considered to be intrinsically desirable, in a primordial arrangement and economy of things. It would be rejected if that were possible. If it were a merely gratuitous element, it would not be admitted. God would not choose it for its own sake, and because he loves it. And is the Infinite driven to the necessity of its incorporation in His economy of things. But this is to limit God in His own sphere and work. He is then conditioned and dependent,—a crea-

ture of circumstances,—obliged to that which otherwise he would not do. He is controlled by something aside from His nature, and which is not of His own intrinsic being, in His own work and way. The element of wrong is in the ascendant, and demands to be an ingredient in the divine economy of the universe. This at once destroys all ideas of the infinite and absolute perfection of God, and puts Him in humiliating relations to wrong in the out-going of his own mind, and his *inherent capacity* for an intrinsically right and perfect system. This, then, could not be. God could not be God, under this form of doctrine. The Infinite excludes all imperfection and wrong, as the emanation of the mind and economy of God.

But there is a *logical difficulty* in the reference of sin to the methods of the Infinite, and it lies not in the consideration of the power, and wisdom, and all-sufficiency of God, to insure the *absolute* perfection of His work and way, but in this, that sin would be an *impracticable method* with God,—that there could be no motive with Him to entertain an economy of things that was not intrinsically perfect, and that He could feel no inducement to originate a system of which

sin should be an ingredient. A being infinitely good could not incorporate wrong as an element in His method. Such an element would vitiate it in his view. There would be in it no condition of divine forthgoing. God is a power only in the direction of His own perfections. What they repudiate, it could not be His to institute. He would see no reason for it. The terms of a divine activity would not be supplied by it. It is logically as impossible, as that intelligence should act without reason, or qualities exist without substances, or that a thing should, at once, both be and not be. It is only an absurdity. Let the thought be here a little extended. Will one choose and ordain the infraction of His own will? Can an Infinite being, in His own method, thus falsify Himself, and appoint the disruption of His own word and law? Can He ordain an economy which He forbids, and *will that* which His nature rejects, and against which every divine attribute antagonizes? Can He *will* to have his *will* broken? Will intelligence work so? Can this be a law of mind? Is it of finite mind? Can it be of the Infinite? We are made in His likeness. Can the infinitely perfect One ordain the disruption of His own law and

authority,—appoint His own dishonor, and prescribe His own degradation? The thought is simply preposterous. The possibility of such a juncture beleaguers all the laws of mind, and staggers the conception of all morality.

And then, if it were possible, it would be done because it were best that it should be. God would not ordain sin, in an economy, if in its relations *there* it were not good, and if it were not an absolute good that it should be there.

But a plan, or economy of things, is for the sake of its execution. That which is good in the one is good in the other, and what is good and best as in a plan, is good and best in its execution. He who put it in the plan, put it there for the sake of its execution, and can but will its execution, and he who executes it but obeys his will and does him service. And is this the fact in relation to sin? A plan is good for nothing except for its execution. Its virtue and vitality lie in its realization. It is made to that end. The will and mind of its author terminates on that. He sees his end accomplished in the execution of his plan, and that accomplishment is his method, and has his indorsement, as agreeable to him, and which he, indeed,

may see carried out by all the power and authority of his being. But does this describe God's attitude towards sin,—that abominable thing which he hates and forbids? Can we place Him in relations of such irreconcilable contrariety to it as this requires? Does the will of God look two ways in relation to the same matter? Does He ignore His own plan of things, and prohibit that maturing of His own counsels in an actuality for which He made them, and without which they would be nugatory and objectless? Does He proscribe what he prescribes, and which, if prescribed, is for the best? Did He this in the garden where, with infinite authority, He warned Adam against sin? Were all that commination and interdict, and that searching inquisition in the case, but a show of feeling against that which was best, and which He willed should be done as indispensable to the fulfilment of the purposes of God and His great end in all things? Other things apart, what a pageant it makes of the universe! Is our Jéhovah the Janus of Roman mythology? Is there not a more excellent way of truth, and one more accordant with the first truths of reason and the Bible?

Again: *There is a moral difficulty in the as-*



*sumption that sin is of the Infinite, and exists as God's method of the universe.* And this difficulty presents itself at various points of the argument, and shows the utter impossibility of the introduction of sin into the system, through the Divine, primordial arrangement of the universe. If God introduces sin as a method in His economy of things, it must be from choice. Intelligence in its executive decrees is essentially voluntary. But the Infinite, as we have seen, cannot be driven, by force of circumstances, into the unwilling and reluctant acceptation of sin into His method of the universe. He may freely act toward it, according to the moral repulsions of His being. If He does not like it He need not have it. His plan shall have in it only what pleases Him. If He introduces sin into it, it must be from affinity to its nature, and because He sees it among the all things that are perfect, and that, as in His word, He pronounces "very good." Sin, brought in by other agencies and as another's method, may complicate the Divine economy, and lead to that in the Divine dealings within that sphere of wrong which God inherently does not like, as in the discipline and punishment of wrong, and which He now terms His

strange work." But sin would not be His method if it were not His choice. It would not be by His arrangement, if not in itself good, and according to His moral nature and will. If not agreeable to Him, He would not adopt it. If not in accordance with His moral nature, He would reject it. There could be no constraint in the premises. If His perfections repelled it, it would not be in His method. If it were not in His heart, it would not be in His plan. And if it is in His plan, it is because He voluntarily chooses it, and places it there out of regard to its intrinsic nature and tendency. And is this God's relation to sin? All virtue, all intelligence say no. To have thus introduced sin into the Divine method of things would compromise every perfection of the Deity; and to have introduced it there otherwise, would have been impossible. The conception of it limits the Infinite One, and puts Him in the power of wrong. But a voluntary adoption of sin as integral in the Divine economy, and from sympathy with its intrinsic nature and tendency, compromises the moral perfections of God. That would be the work of a malevolent being, if such a being is conceivable in the Infinite, or, strictly speaking, anywhere

within the sphere of intelligence. It is the abhorred maxim that "the end justifies the means." It is repellant of all morality. It is not of God, or like Him. While He appeals to us to recognize the fact that His ways are equal, and would condescendingly justify Himself at the bar of the conscience He has given us, we cannot but see that such a method is false to every principle of rectitude, both in the Creator, and in His intelligent offspring.

The plan and method of a being give His character. They are of Him, and like Him. If the Divine plan is a mixed one, and incorporates sin and wrong as inherently of it, in its execution and results, and if all the sin that burdens earth and hell is but the fulfilment of it, then is the same needful to carry out the intentions and wishes of the Deity. And then is there just as much sin and wrong in the universe, just as much transgression of His will, and trampling on His authority, and blaspheming of His name, as He would have, and as He chose to incorporate in His free and unembarrassed plan of things, and with no necessity for sin at all, but all from love to its intrinsic nature. Although He might have had, and in our view must have had, and

always has a plan and economy of things, which eschew all evil, and bear the impress and acknowledged superscription of His own moral perfection; He gratuitously adopts a method which incorporates and contains all the sin and misery over which He, and all good beings in the universe, lament, and for the relief of which He has instituted all the remedies of the Gospel.

Besides, *This sets the purpose against the law of God.* He must, according to it, forbid the fulfilment of His own plan and arrangement respecting intelligent beings. He must say to them in respect to that which enters integrally into the woof of His own economy concerning them, "Oh! do not this wickedness, and sin against God." It makes God the proponent of all the wrong in the universe—of all the wickedness which he condemns and will visit with His displeasure, and in that sense the indorser of all the infractions of right, and all the triumphs of vice over virtue, at which the heart of piety bleeds.

Again: *Placing sin in the method and purpose of God, works confusion in all the obligations of religion and morality.* May I not do the will of God? and is not His own method

and purpose in accordance with His will, and the unalloyed and complete expression of it? Is not His will concentrated on His plan of things? Is it not the outgoings and concrete manifestation of the Deity? Is it not the result of Infinite wisdom and goodness? Could it be wiser or better? and can there be anything in which the heart of God is more interested, and to which His honor and will are more pledged than the eventuation of His own purposes,—the fulfilment of His own plan and method of the universe? And if His mind and heart are there, may not mine be? If this is the method of His glory, and of His great end in all things, shall it not be mine? May I not will what God wills, and for the same reason—that it is best? and thus have conformity of Spirit and aim with Him, and lose my will in His? Is there a purpose of His that I should not approve and love? or a feature of His plan and method of things that should not have my cordial affections and consent? But this cannot be if sin and wrong are the method of the Deity. I find them prohibited in my being and in His law. The will of God, as revealed in His purpose, and in His law, is by the position made to be discrepant with

itself, and I am confounded by this discrepancy. Here has originated the nomenclature of "decretive" and "preceptive" will, no way analogous to each other. The one embraces sin and all evil; the other repudiates it. The one finds its transcript in all that occurs, from every agency in the universe; the other only in that which is right. The first in its accomplishment is necessary to God's great end in all things, and is the result of His Infinite wisdom; the other is descriptive of all moral rectitude. And we ask, in which is the heart of God the most concentrated, and in submission to which shall I most glorify Him? It is not sufficient to say that the plan is secret, and the law published. The plan is published as fast as sins are committed. And the belief that they are in the plan of God, and the fulfilment of it, and are of His own method in the universe, works the confusion in the premises. We instinctively feel that there is double-dealing and insincerity in such a juncture, and that it is not good and God-like, and that we ought not thus to be placed between His purpose and His law, and find in His "decretive will," all that antagonizes with His revealed precepts, and with all that contributes to the

sanctity and honor of His name. Has morality no law? Has it no foundation in the perfections of God, and the essential rightness of His method and ways? Can we not estimate it in the Infinite? How, then, shall I know that God is good? And may I imitate Him in everything moral but in His relations to wrong, and there must we feel that our wrong-doing is His plan concerning us—our transgression of His law the fulfilment in some sense of His purpose and His will?

Again : *The constituting of sin as God's method of the universe makes Him powerless for good in relation to it.* If sin is in accordance with the plan and purpose of God, and the amount and manner of it are all arranged in the Divine economy of things, and if it takes place as His method, and according to His decretive will, what heart or power can He have against it? He must favor His own plan of things. He must regard complacently His own purposes, and see them individually connected with His great end in all things. God has unity of being. "He is of one mind, and none can turn Him." That which He has purposed has the accord of all His perfections. He cannot war with His own method. And if all sin is an ingredient in

that method, it can but meet the mind and will of God in the relations and to the extent in which it is decreed. It is decreed for the sake of its accomplishment, and is accomplished by the supposition as decreed, and must have in it the heart of God, as having for wise reasons ordained it; and all Divine antagonism to it, as thus related to God, is, of course, impossible. This is neutralized by sin's relation to Him, as His economy. Will one war against his own method? No sin, by the position, exists or can, but what is in the Divine plan and method, and but is there according to the mind and will of God. All vitality is thus extracted from His exhortations, His prohibitions, and threatened retributions, in respect to it. They become vapid and unintelligible. They lie against all sin, and yet all sin is God's way, and the consummation of His will. There is a Janus face on the whole transaction. The whole matter becomes an inappreciable enigma. Will God forbid His own appointments? Will He ignore His own plan, and punish a morality that He has instituted? It is not unity or consistency of being. It is not so much a mystery as a contradiction. The anomaly is not so much in relation to the ques-



tion of free agency in the creature, as of the moral unity of the Creator, and our capability of appreciating His character and consistency, all whose ways are commended to us as righteousness and truth. There is no trimming of terms that will meet the demands of this subject. Sin is a portentous fact; a purely moral evil; a mighty economy of unalloyed wrong. It may be viewed in its individual or aggregate enormities; in its attributes, or collected expression; in its spirit, its aim or tendency; in its hostility to God, its mischief to man, or its war on the universe, or in its wrath, and guilt, and self-condemnation. The facts are conceded on either hand, and are to be accounted for. We may not ignore them, and make the being of God and His moral government, and will, and ways, a riddle or an absurdity, or all created existence a pageant and a farce, and all morality and righteousness a misnomer from the beginning. And we must accept the one alternative or the other. Here is a stupendous agency of evil—a vast economy of intrinsic, moral wrong. It is defiant of God, and destructive of all good. It is prohibited of God, and inherits His wrath and curse. It wars on every divine perfection—on every principle

of morality and every sentiment of virtue. Its conception and spirit are only enmity against God, and vice among men, and hostility alike to both tables of the law. God disowns it as the antagonist of His being and government, and the enemy of all righteousness, and is making war upon it as that "abominable thing which His soul hates." And either it is His economy or it is not. It is precisely according to His plan and purpose, and wrought into them from no necessity in the case, but from a pure, complacent regard for it in the Deity, as belonging to a perfect system, and itself "very good;" and, in the relations in which He has purposed, and, in which alone it occurs and is carried out, is but the fulfilment of His primal arrangement of things, and is just as He would have it; or it is not. If it is not *there*, then we will look for its method, and inception, and cause, and prosecution elsewhere. But if it is *all His own*, and if it finds its origin as a method, and its proposition in the Divine mind, then let us manfully seek to justify the position to all reason and righteousness, and to all the known and published, and all the inherent relations of God and goodness to wrong. Let us not hide such a dogma

among the secret things of God, and eschew all intelligent investigation or apprehension of it. Let us not consecrate a fallacy, and then make its very solecism the argument of our submission, and the principle of our worship.

In closing under this head, I *recur* to the thought that the theory that sin lies in the plan and proposed method of the Deity for a universe, is *necessarily* false. It cannot be true, whatever else is true. It hypothecates that in respect to God which is simply an impossibility. It hypothecates on Him a fraud, and a wrong, and a lie. Who is God, and what is sin? and how are they and must they be related? What is the spirit, and system, and economy of sin, and moral wrong, but diametrical opposition to God,—resistance of His will, and a violation of His spirit, and righteous method, and economy in all things? Its very nature excludes it from being His way of the universe. Is there no unity in God? Will He accept a folly and a vice, and choose a wrong against His nature and being? Reason pronounces such a recourse, in its very nature, suicidal in the Infinite. It would be an insincerity,—a play,—a trick,—a falsity. He would repudiate His own method, and scorn His

own suggestion. It would be the work of a malevolent being. The introduction or adoption of an economy of moral wrong, and the entertainment and fellowship of it, as an economy, would be all that malevolence could do in the premises. It is worse than the institution of physical evil, needlessly. It is the institution of that moral wrong, and the fellowship of it gratuitously on the part of God, in an economy of things, without which physical ills are impossible. In God such an economy must be simply a contradiction—an utter impossibility. But the absurdity is not exhausted in a consideration of its moral aspect. It is a logical impossibility. The being of God decides His relation to sin. The Infinite can be in favor of it in no respect, nohow, and nowhere. If the perfections of God mean anything, and the personal existence of God is a reality, it is so in the direction of all righteousness. Both reason and revelation give the Divine relations to wrong in an economy, and as an ingredient thereof, as necessarily those of utter antagonism to it. His perfections and His personality are wholly on the side of all virtue, all righteousness, and all conformity with Himself, on the part of intelligent creatures, and

in the direction of all communion and fellowship on His part with them. How, then, is it logically conceivable that He should institute for them the opposites of all these, and inaugurate sin, apostasy, and all wrong, as His own method and economy of a created, intelligent universe? He has taken the one side, as uttered in His being and our own,—in the constitution of nature, and in the teaching of His providence and word; and does He take the other side, too? Have His perfections no determination? and is He without unity of being and purpose? Is it logically possible that He should, in His own economy of things, choose what he hates, and choose it too, if at all, out of simple preference to it,—enter into sympathy with that which is intrinsic opposition to him, and is utterly loathsome in His sight, out of an overweening love for it, and because it is better in his system than conformity to His nature and will would be, and be a better ingredient in its place, than anything else could be? Ah! indeed, and not that only, but *itself* a *perfect good*, as the principle of perfection is the necessary, and declared one of the Deity, in all His thoughts, and works, and ways.

## THE SUBJECT MAY BE INVESTIGATED.

But many, with the Reviewer, insist on a "blind, sightless faith" at this point, and scandalize any attempt to investigate the Divine relations to wrong. The objection goes to the *vitality* of our whole discussion, and more especially of the head last considered; and we may as well here, as elsewhere, examine somewhat its contents and pretensions. The position is in its drift, and claims that God is above law. Morality is impossible, and irrelevant in application to Him. No rule reaches Him. No principle of righteousness, as elsewhere existing, obtains in relation to Him. It is indifferent to us what He is, or what He does, or what His relations are to right or wrong. His being and relations to all else are such, that, for aught we know, He may do anything, and take any method to any end which He has in view. No *à priori* judgment can be formed of Him,—no intelligent conception be had of any principle of righteousness as necessarily inhering in Him, or of what is possible, or consistent in Him. God may be God, and be to be loved and worshipped, though conceived of as doing whatever is possible to

the simple elements of infinite Authorship and Almightyness.

In the last analysis the position goes to this. The Infinite has in respect to itself no laws cognizable by the human mind. There are no first-truths of reason applicable to God, except it be that of the absence of all first-truths, and our utter inadequacy to understand His being and perfections. Now, if this be so, let us take the principle on to the wide margin of conclusions that legitimately attach to it, and trace its effect on all morality and virtue, and on the existence *itself* of a system of Divine moral government at all. But here let me ask :

1. *Is there no PRESUMPTION in this position?* True, its pretension is humility. It criticises the powers of reason, and magnifies the difficulty of the idea of God. It wraps the Infinite One in clouds, as if the conception of Him is not necessary to reason, and the very instinct of childhood;—as if the knowledge of God is not the basis of every complete idea, and did not lie at the root of every thought. It quotes complacently such passages as the following: “Secret things belong unto the Lord.” “Who, by searching, can find out God; who can find out the

Almighty unto perfection?" We know nothing perfectly, or to a perfect comprehension of it; but then do we know nothing absolutely? Have we no knowledge, and no such knowledge of anything that we may certainly affirm that some things must be true of it, and others not? We do not know God perfectly, but then do we know nothing of Him, or about Him, so that we can affirm this to be of Him, and like Him, and deny that *that* is, or can be of Him? Has he made no revelation of Himself in our reason, in His works, and in His word? Do we know nothing of His relations to us, and especially of His moral relations? May He do anything and everything which would ruin the character and credit of any other intelligence, and yet shall reason take no exception, and the moral sense feel no ground of offence? May He be untrue to His word, or justify wrong, or treat alike the innocent and the guilty? And why not? Is it a merely arbitrary fact in which is found no inherent relevancy and appositeness? Is it otherwise than because truth and righteousness are of the very nature and being of God eternally and necessarily? Who shall assume that truth and righteousness are not of the Divine nature? Who is wise



enough to interdict an inquiry in this direction, and forbid all intelligent apprehension of the subject? Common candor will see more presumption in ignoring this matter than in a humble attempt to understand and appreciate it. The foreclosure must be in view of the reasons for it, as ascertained from the being of God, and must arise out of a study and a knowledge of *Him* in the premises, the study and knowledge of whom it interdicts. If I may not understand the Divine relations to wrong, it must be from some reasons known, in the being of God, why I may not. This you gain by the study and apprehension of what God is. You claim to have learned from the study of the being, and perfections, and relations of God, that you cannot appreciate His relations to moral evil. Do you not assume for yourself what you deny to others? You utter your "*caveat*" against the investigation of the being and relations of God, by reason of that which you claim to have ascertained through an investigation of the being and relations of God. You have studied the Unconditioned till you learn that the study of Him is impossible. You have done, *ad ignorantiam*, what another may not attempt, for edifica-

tion, and the justification of all righteousness. It is this, or else (and which is the undoubted issue) you infer from the fact of sin that it must be of God, and in some sense His method of the universe, and thus agreeable to Him; and then further infer from this fact, thus correlated with God, the unappreciability of His relations to wrong, and in all this do most effectually, though without intending it, take sides with those who deny a personal God, and abjure all religion as cant and hypothesis.

Again: *This is a moral subject.* It is related to the question of duty. It underlies all morality, and associates itself with the elements of all intelligent accountability. How shall I apprehend my own moral being if I may not the moral being of God? I am made in His image, and may I not know what it is, as the gauge and direction of my own? I am invited to be like God, and may I not know what that is, and that it is likeness to Him? Is conformity to Him like resemblance to an unknown quantity? May He sustain any and all relations to wrong, and in this shall I be like Him? Is there no bent and direction of His being in relation to it, and no oneness and character in His agency in re-

spect to it? Is sin, intrinsically, as good as virtue in His sight, that He should adopt it as a method in His conception and administration of the universe? And has He prescribed the one and interdicted the other *to me* only as being in the finite, and merely for an arbitrary and local end? Is His law no way descriptive of Himself, and of His ways, and methods, and acts? Is not virtue the inherent moral likeness of the Deity? Has all righteousness no necessary affinity to the nature of God? Are all moral distinctions unresolvable into His being, and all moral relations undistinguishable and out of harmony there? In a word, has He no moral nature, and are right and wrong inherently indifferent and of no account in their reference to Him? Who shall say all this? We may not predicate theft or murder of the Deity, for He can take but what He gave, and is His own. But truth is eternal. Will He, can He falsify that? Would you any more have confidence in Him, if He did? Would not His character be gone, and the universe mourn that there was no one it could worship? Could He treat others, irrespectively of character, or lay on man the duties of Gabriel? Could He take Satan into

fellowship, or proscribe virtue, or prescribe vice? No, no, a thousand times no; and all the universe may know it.\* You must have character in the Infinite, and appreciate it there. God must have, in its principle, the moral nature He requires of those made in His image, and His law to them must be the index of the essential righteousness of His own interior life and being. Here is the unity of the moral universe, the oneness in aim, and purpose, and nature of all holy beings, the assimilation of the finite to the Infinite in love and likeness; the creature one in heart with God.

But if God is in Himself above virtue, if righteousness does not dwell in Him as an attribute, and He Himself, in His plans, and purposes, and methods, may sustain any and all relations to wrong, and thus have indifference of nature to it; the foundations of duty and right are gone, and their inherent vitality and obligations have vanished away. Virtue is no more so much a moral quality as an expedient,—a resort, a bare means to an end,—a merely arbitrary appointment of one who is in equal fellowship with

\* Even "all Lilliput," as in the "Princeton Review," if responsible beings are there.

any other method, and any opposite principle. It is but a plaything, a prudence. Ah! you have it not, and you cannot have it in the universe. If character and conduct are not in God, and all righteousness be not intrinsically of Him and like Him; if the one personal, "I AM," is not good and holy, as in simplicity we may understand the epithets, and if to be holy in heart and in purpose is not to be like Him, and to possess His moral nature; then all duty is a bugbear, and all obligation a misnomer, and a moral universe but "the baseless fabric of a vision." Then, truly, do all moral distinctions disappear, and religion itself become but an airy phantom of the imagination.

Again: *This is eminently a PRACTICAL SUBJECT.* We must, in order to conduct and character, be intelligently assured that virtue has its principle in the being and will of God, and that we speak no *double-entendre* when we say so. This is not of the "secret things" which belong only to God, but to us and to our children. The knowledge of the "day and the hour of the coming of the Son of man" may be kept back, and many other matters be closed in the womb of the future; but must I not know what God

means when He bids me eschew all sin, and that in obedience I am conformed in heart to Him, and that in His law I read His whole mind and heart in relation to sin and wrong? May I feel that He prescribes to me a virtue, which is to Him, of itself and inherently, an indifferent thing, and that in His prescription to me I get no index of what He is, and will do Himself, but that whatever His requirement be, He does Himself sustain all contradictory relations to wrong, both as a method and a fact? Shall I conclude that my holiness is no conformity to His nature, and no agency in the direction of His being, and purpose, and will? Shall I regard the sphere of the Infinite as above all righteousness, and that all morality is but a prudential method; a merely strategic arrangement which has no inherence in the nature of God, no unity with the flow of His being, and the beating of the mighty heart of the Deity? This would be an orphanage indeed; cold as icebergs the monitions to duty and the incentives to action that can harbor in it. Separate character and conduct, a holy heart and a godly life in the creature, from its parent stock in the Creator, and let it be no essential conformity

with God and no "*partaking of the divine nature*;" and you make it an impossibility everywhere, and take the life of virtue.

Again: *Reason defines the relations of the Infinite to sin and wrong.* The thoughts here in place have been before referred to, and the *legitimacy* of the discussion lies in the *subject matter* of it. What Reason dictates, *that* I may inquire into, and may know. If she asserts as she indubitably does, that the Infinite can but, have a method intrinsically perfect like Himself, and in harmony, in its forthgoings and scope, with the principles of all righteousness; I may notice her teachings, and correct my reckoning in the premises by her infallible first truths. If an economy of sin supplies not to the Infinite a motive to action, if sin cannot be within the terms of a Divine movement in its behalf, but is rejected as an economy and a fact, by the necessary perfections of the Deity; then is the subject not enigmatical, or in the dark. So far from demanding a "blind and sightless faith," the intuitions of reason are beaming benignly over it, and that which the simplicity and directness of childhood would say on it, fathoms the depth of all philosophy concerning it. Sin is in no sense of God,

neither as a method or an experience. The concrete and the speculative agree,—the asseverations of reason and the sentiments of the heart,—truth in philosophy and truth in fact. Fictitious dialectics may turn aside the minds of men and leave them eddying in a whirlpool of contradictions, but the intelligence that God has given must assert the prerogative of its first truths, and declare that moral evil cannot be the plan and purpose of the Deity. It arises from another quarter, and as another method and agency, and finds in the Infinite and perfect but its antagonism and discomfiture.

With this coincides the uniform testimony of the providence and word of God, at once legitimatizing our discussion, and, in view of prevalent theories, pleading its necessity.

But there is a *further reply* to the interdict here interposed to the discussion of the Divine relations to wrong. The disclaimer is founded on a *mundane idea*. The principle on which it rests is historically heathenish in its origin. It likens God to those divinities which were above truth and character, and a personally righteous and holy nature, and whose totality was a unit of irresponsible power. It sacrifices to the senti-



ment of an overawing Moloch of physical almightiness every other element of the being of God. I see not my heavenly Father in it, or the moral personality of the God of the Bible, or the doctrine of Him, who, "though one with God, took upon him our nature, and was in all points tempted like as we are, though without sin." It belongs to a rude and iron age. It is of the times when "a man was famous, according as he had lifted up axes on the thick trees." It exalts the physical at the expense of the moral in a Deity. Its type is in the leading characteristics of the divinities of heathendom, to this day; indifference to virtue, arbiters of "blind" fate, negligent, and self-forgetful to the verge even of a positive immorality. No, we like neither its origin, nor its tendency. It lacks spirituality. There is not in it the soul, the heart, the sympathies, the affections of a distinct and perfect personality and intelligence. I may shudder before the divinity it depicts, as before an overpowering Colossus; but I cannot love it, and garner up my heart in it, nor can I see its correlative in any of that class of passages which interlace and form the very network of the Bible, of which the following is a speci-

men: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The relations of moral evil are, in fact, among the subjects most vital to truth and duty. Its relation to God, and the intelligent creatures of God, is of the nature of a necessary first truth of reason and the Bible. The hinge of a moral system is just there. If sin is God's method of the universe, that is one thing. If it is not, that is quite another. His relations to it indicate what He is, and interpret all He says and does. The relations here grouped are, to all morality and piety, of the most intimate and imperative kind. Where God is, in this respect, is the keystone of the arch; it is the base of the structure. In it is the grand principle, and element, and idea, of a moral system. If I may not know what God is,—what His perfections are, and what are His relations to right and wrong, and whether I have His being in His word, His moral likeness in His law, and whether I gain conformity of heart to *Him* by obedience to all

intrinsic truth and righteousness; I may as well not know anything else, and give up all morality and religion as a misconception from the first. If I must stand in doubt of God, and of His relations in this matter,—if I must regard Him as the patron of right by construction, while He selects sin as a method, and that of choice and without necessity, as the only way of the Infinite; if God is above all moral estimate, and His perfections are such by authority only,—if he may do any and all things,—sustain any and all relations to wrong in the universe,—adopt indifferently all methods to ends, and if what He requires of me is, in its principle, no index of what He is, in Himself; and if the facts of the creation oblige me to ignore the investigation of the character of its author, and all His methods of revelation have not succeeded in showing to His “own image” in the finite that He is one who escheweth evil; then, indeed, are we in darkness, and a “sightless” dogmatism must be our “only safeguard from a rampant and boastful scepticism.” But “we have not so learned Christ,” and all religion is not thus driven to the wall. God has too well revealed Himself *in us* and *to us*, for the inauguration of so stupid an

idolatry. We may, if we will, know well enough where He stands on the great question of "honor and right," and what His relations are to sin and wrong. They are written, as with sunbeams, on all that we know of Him. They are in the moral of our being as the reflection of His own, and in all His objective communications to us.

And yet I have one more allegation to make, as it arises out of the attitude of God's condescension towards us, and in the testimony of His Word. Both the principle and the truth of this objection are *rebutted* and *rebuked*, *in the coming of Christ*. This was a manifestation of God, and of His relations to sin, and for the sake of the manifestation of God in respect to sin, and His methods against it. It was a "*theophany*;"—"God manifest in the flesh," that we "might know Him, who is the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." It was God "justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, and received up into glory," "that henceforth it might be true that we had *seen Him*, and *known Him*." As in the words of Christ: "If ye had known *me*, you should have known *my Father*

also, and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him." The same sentiment is presented with characteristic pathos and tenderness in the 1st Epistle of John, v. 20: "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may *know* Him that is *true*, and we are in Him that is true, even in His son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God* and eternal life." One of the disciples of Christ, in the days of His flesh, got into the dilemma of our objector here, and "saith unto Jesus, Lord, *show* us the Father and it sufficeth us." And his petition met the prompt and searching accusative response of the patient Saviour, "Have I been so long with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou, then, show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the work." And he repeats the thought, to the intent that it may not be forgotten, as I quote the repetition to the same end: "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me, or else believe me for the very

*work's* sake." "At that day, ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." "If any man love me, he will keep my Word; and my Father will love him, and, we will come unto him and make our abode with him." Christ is declared to be "the image of the invisible God." "For it pleased the Father, that in Him (Christ) should all fulness dwell." "For in Him dwelleth all the *fulness of the Godhead* bodily." But God in Christ was manifested to take away sin. This is the express testimony of the loving disciple. "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth *in Him* sinneth not. He that committeth sin is of the Devil, for the Devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might *destroy* the works of the Devil." Thus the words of Christ himself: "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light. If I had not come they had not had sin, but now have they no cloak for their sin, they have both *seen* and *hated both me* and *my Father*." The whole Gospel is but a manifestation of God, and a definition of His relations to sin. It is so, that

we may have "no cloak for our sin," and be "without excuse" respecting it. And yet, with all these manifestations of God, to us, and in us, and for us, and the whole Gospel to this end, and converging on this point, the distinguished Reviewer would have us believe that we may not appreciate or canvass the Divine relations to wrong. Nothing can be more obvious than that the very gist and "animus" of the objection which, in view of its prominence, I have so much at length considered, lie directly against the aim and methods of God in His word, and most of all in the manifestation of Himself, in the person of His Son. And in view of a theophany like that there made to us, our humiliation is the more profound and poignant that a teacher in Israel, and one who stands at the apex of Christian theology in one direction, now, in the noon of the nineteenth century of grace, must concede to the infidelity of the age, that religion has its elements in "a blind, sightless faith," and that such a faith "is our only safeguard from scepticism."\*

We allege, then, the legitimacy of the inquiries hitherto prosecuted, and pass to the *second* step suggested in the direct discussion of our subject.

\* Princeton Review, as above.

## CHAPTER IV.

### SIN A METHOD IN THE FINITE.

**M**ORAL evil, both as a method and a fact, is fully accounted for in finite cause. Sin is possible only in the finite, and through apostasy there. In this, as always, philosophy and fact agree. The Infinite rejects sin, antecedates it, and shows, by all necessary perfection in God, its utter incompatibility and utter impossibility there. This it does not because injustice, and falseness to truth, and to the claims of all righteousness and the institution of all wrong would not be wrong in God, but because His infinitely holy perfections exclude all this, and because all this does not give the terms of a Divine activity. Sin, as an actuality, implies the relation of Creator and created, of absolute and dependent being, of self-existent intelligence, and created intelligence like it, and in correspondence with it, though of course in the



finite. It implies the existence of authority and law, and their rightful emanation and respondents. You must have created intelligences before you can have existent wrong; without them no relations subsist which can beget it, and no personality capable of it. To the Infinite it is impossible, by the very perfections of His being, and His glory it is, that all righteousness is His only element. This is the sum of all perfection ever existing in the alone Jehovah. To the Infinite there could be no inducement to wrong. Sin could not be of the nature of intelligent action there. The sphere of the Infinite excludes it. God, from His very nature and perfections, is infinitely removed from all thought of sin. It is intrinsically impossible there, as not being the method and way of the Deity. It is possible only in creatures, and there not as their normal state and mode of being. God could not make a sinful being, for the same reason that He could not be sinful Himself, or "cannot lie." God, we repeat, is a power in the direction of His own intelligence and perfections, and that is the direction of all right. He has no power to do wrong, or to constitute it, or to inaugurate it as a form of existence. He

will form intelligent beings, as, without them, creation would be without an object, and might as well exist *in* the Divine mind as *out* of it. He will form them in His own image, as this is the only law of perfectness, as well as the inherent necessity of all intelligence. To intelligent creatures only could the Creator reveal Himself, and with them only have correspondence and fellowship. And they will bear "His likeness," for intelligence is itself and not something else, and homogeneous in its principle, both in the Infinite and the finite, and will possess the data of direct and mutual reciprocity and intercommunication. Intelligence in the finite will see that God is, and what His perfections are, and be capable of appreciating His character and messages, and doing His will. It will apprehend His righteousness, and find its legitimate growth and perfectness in a spiritual conformity to Him. Intelligent beings will be God's crowning work in creation, and that for which all else is made, and will be the Divine likeness in the finite, as Revelation avers. They will be created with an intelligent moral nature, for that is the nature of God, and the direction of His power. So God *did* create both angels

and men. These are the only created intelligences known to us, and they were made "in the image and after the likeness of God," and all deviation since has been the accretion of their history, and must be so, and this is in agreement with all the records in the case.

But all intelligence is cause, inherently so, and in its own right. It has an executive faculty. It has, in itself, the prerequisites of conduct, and character, and rightful destiny, in a voluntary executiveness. It has the power to act electively, in view of the conditions of voluntary action. It has, as an attribute, moral freedom. God has it in His sphere, though there it is unvaryingly determined by the perfections of the Infinite. Created intelligences have it in their sphere. The principle of cause lies in the intelligence as a necessary attribute without which it could not be intelligence, whether in the finite or Infinite; and no less properly and constituently in the one than in the other. As well say that black is white, or vice virtue, or the whole of a thing less than a part of it, as deny that intelligence is cause, and intelligent beings conscious cause, and the executive will the only cause known. God could not make intelligent

creatures otherwise, for otherwise they would not be intelligent beings made in His likeness. His work involves no absurdity. They might be blocks, or stones, or trees, but intelligent, responsible beings they could not be. In order to be accounted such they must have the attributes of intelligent beings, of voluntary, responsible action, in view of the prerequisites thereto, as found in the judgment and the sensibilities. There must be the gift of executiveness, the executive, personal will, or where is the being? Where is the personal "Me," or the self-conscious identity and responsibility? Simple thought or feeling may be viewed in the abstract, perhaps; but conceive, if you can, of a being who has not self-activity;—of an intelligent being with no power of action, no personal self,—no forthgoing in a vitalized and self-conscious actualness,—of a personal, responsible agent, with no constituent element of cause in him. As well be a block or a stone, as to any living individuality of being, or any reciprocal sympathy with the Infinite, or any predicate of an intelligence fashioned in His likeness.

Finite intelligences are of course dependent on God for their being and constituent attri-

butes, but possessing these, they have a *nature*,—an intelligent, moral nature, and that nature is, to use the materials of thought and feeling,—to give rise to their own voluntary states,—to originate their own acts, and be themselves the authors of their own conduct and character. Intelligent, moral action is as properly their nature and capability, as it is God's. True, it is derivative being, but thereby not the less real. It is an emanation from God, but it is an actuality in them. The doctrine and the elements of cause are as inherent in their being as in the Author of it. He has thus made them in His likeness. They have distinct personality—are personal cause,—are authors of their own voluntary states and acts. These are theirs as a method and a fact—in spirit and kind—in manner and amount, and only theirs,—their devisings, their purposes, and their personal, self-conscious sphere, and that of no other being in the universe. This is their plan and method of securing their objects. It is distinctive in its relations, in its aspects, in its centrality, and in its responsible offshoots and outgoings. It is not God's authorship, or method, or causality. It could not be, for it is not like Him, but infinitely

less, and wholly variant it may be, and opposed to Him; and he says it is not His. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

But finite intelligence, though real personal cause, is *contingent* cause. It must act electively in its executive faculty, but it may act wrongfully and wickedly. It may be led astray through defective premises, and it may come to have perversity of will. It may follow the lead of objective temptation, which is the way of the beginning of wrong, and thus forget God, as Eve *did*, and it may become subtle and wily as her deceiver was. It can turn from holiness to sin, as angels did, or from sin to holiness, as the redeemed do. This is the nature of finite personality and intelligence, and it cannot be altered. It is inherently thus. Alter it, and you destroy it, for this is of its essential nature and being. Infinity cannot make it otherwise, for otherwise made, it would not be finite intelligence and personality. It is of necessity finite, contingent cause. Its life can be cancelled, but

its terms cannot be shifted. It may lie open to inducements and influences, from any and all directions, from reason, conscience, or the passions, from the spirit of evil, or the Spirit of God, and to the conditions of its elective agency on either hand; but while it is itself, and has its own individual personality, it has the power of originating its voluntary and responsible states and acts. It is itself cause in the sphere of its own will, and can act right or wrong. It is ever capable of choice in either direction, and there is *inherently* no other guaranty of its course than what moral means supply. Of all this, God reveals His conviction in relation to Adam before he sinned, in that solemn warning in his ear, as a new created, and holy, but finite agent, on the subject of transgression. That was no pageant. It was given in all Divine integrity, as knowing the inherent liabilities of finite mind. The same great truth concerning intelligence in the finite, is evinced in the issue made in the garden. A righteous being did become unholy,—changed his moral character and relations, and wrongfully, and against the will and warning of God, and all the reasons for continued right action of which his condition and history were susceptible;

did show his power of wrong choice, and exercise his prerogative of cause in the direction of all wrong, and every child of Adam has had conscious experience of this prerogative of finite intelligence unto this day. It may be seen in the analysis of any man's experience, and lying *there*, we cannot well mistake the truth respecting it. As truth and right are in harmony with the constituent elements of all intelligence, and right action may be regarded as its normal state; so sin and wrong may be viewed as incidental, and may in their incipency be the *especial* liability of the earlier periods in the history of creation, but in respect to all the races of finite intelligences known to us, they have become a prominent and impressive actuality.

And here, in finite cause, is the *origin* of moral evil. Its origin is here, both as a method and a fact,—as a principle and an economy. Its ground, and arrangement, and whole genesis are here, as well as itself. It is in him that sins,—in sinning angels first, and then in those who have been tempted by them, and have followed their unwise example. This is not of God; it could not be. It is not by his warrant, or prescription, or permission. It is not like Him. “An enemy



hath done it." It is wholly of them that sin. They pursue no Divine plan and purpose, and fulfil no "decretive will" of God in their rebellion against Him, but utterly the contrary. They, themselves, are cause even to a resistance of the will and command of God, and the claims of truth, and conscience, and positive law. Their thoughts are their own, and not God's,—their ways are their own, and not His,—their method and economy are their own, and in opposition to His, and in no sense have in them that which is His. Sin has an economy of its own, and antagonistic to that of God in all things. The wrong-doer comprehends in himself the philosophy of his wrong. Its full analysis and solution are in Him. Its full account is there. All the truth in the premises is in the finite, and there through apostasy. The Infinite One rejects it, and has nothing in it, and only takes action in relation to it, as the method of another and for which he is not responsible, in the prosecution of His own ends, as any good being may in his sphere, in respect to the machinations of the wicked, and serve himself out of them. And here is the coalescence of the concrete and the abstract of truth. As we can-

*not*, in the very nature of the case, throw the economy of sin into the economy of God, so we need not, by any pressure of metaphysics. He can better manage and overrule the spirit of wrong, which has come into the finite without Him, and against His economy, than though it were an ingredient of that economy. The householder could better provide against the tares of the field, being the work of an enemy, than though they were sown by his own hand, and were his own method of culture and crops. Antagonism in the one case there could not be; in the other it is legitimate and appreciable. There is really not so much difficulty in this problem, if we will but allow ourselves to embrace the truth that God is not the *only cause*; that other agents, though in the finite of being, are really agents, endued with the attributes of proper personal cause, and, as such, originate their own conduct and character, and have ways of their own, and plans, and methods, and economies of action averse from God, and in opposition to Him often, and that their purposes are their own, and different from His, and opposed thereto often; and that God's plan, and purpose, and economy of moral government and method

in all things, are athwart of that of wicked men, and like himself, and are carried out only in breaking in upon theirs, and overcoming them, and showing Himself wiser and mightier than they. It is not needful to hold that all the wickedness of the universe has its proposition in the plan and purpose of God, and is thus in accordance with it. Strictly speaking, plans and methods of action are as unique as character and conduct, as multifarious as the agents that pursue them, and are their offspring, and bear their impress and idiosyncrasies. Sin and wrong are the method of other agents than God, whom he in the best time and way will reduce, and recover, or destroy.

The truth as a whole, in the premises, is in perfect and appreciable consistency with it, as viewed in its parts. Its overt and historic development is in sympathy with its abstract and comprehensive statement. Its full expression is in the concrete, and in the high way of our necessary moral convictions and thoughts. The Bible has it in its direct and concurrent testimonies. It is in the mind of a child, and as a necessary first truth of reason and the human spirit. Every agent, as already suggested, has

his own method, and it is like himself. God has His, and it is transparent in a perfect morality; man has his—wicked men theirs—the adversary of all good his, and they are each distinct in their personal authorship and relations. God succeeds in His, not by annihilating all other causation, nor because the plans and purposes, and devisings, and sins, and wrongs, and mischiefs, of all other agents, are also His plan, and way of things, and a transcript of them; but by an independent purpose and course of His own, entering into correlation or conflict with them,—serving Himself and His great and good purposes out of them—supplanting them, reducing them, triumphing over them in every probationary way, it may be at first—and in respect to what cannot there be appropriately done—coming down upon, eventually in the residuary methods of a coercive retribution. “And in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye first the tares in bundles to burn them.”

But these aspects of the subject will gain fresh strength and naturalness in the light of our next position.

## CHAPTER V.

### SPHERE OF MORAL GOVERNMENT.

THE nature and sphere of moral government admit the facts, as contained in the existent, intelligent universe, and show the method of God's control and supremacy over sin. The existence of sin as a method and economy in the finite, and distinct from God, and His method of the universe, is accounted for in the necessary features of a moral system. We have only to regard the inherent principles of such a system, and what must or may occur under it, to see the coincidence of the facts which actually *do* occur with all philosophy on the subject. And here, a general reference to the exceptions already taken to the effete dialectics of the schools may be in place. The universe is not a physical unit, or God the only cause, or our purposes His purposes, or His purposes older than the execution of them, in absolute duration or anything in

His relations to other minds and agents, to forestall the complete idea of an ever-present discretion in Him, in conducting all the moral issues of His extant and current providence. The terms foreknowledge and providence are, in their strictly classical rendering, a misnomer, as referring to the methods of the absolute. They are of use, in accommodation to habits of conception in the finite. With God, is "no beginning of days, nor end of years." He exists in an ever-present eternity. He knows the methods of conception in the finite, in its mutual relations, but in respect to Himself and His own methods in absolute duration, the question of time and antecedence of time has no significance. His purposes are, doubtless, related to His acts as the mental condition of them. This is an order of nature inherent in intelligence. Beyond this I know not what antecedence there is in the absolute relations of the Divine purposes and conduct.

Time is a method in the finite, and confined there. It adheres to the created and conditioned of being, and is necessarily appropriate only there. That which grows older had a beginning. But God had no beginning, and the reference of the

subject before us now is in respect of its relations to Him, in His own sphere of being, and not to us in ours. How things look depends much on our stand-point. The apparent motion of the heavens is not their real motion. There may be an order of things in the Divine mind, but it has not the relations of time there. It can but be ever in the present of the Infinite sphere. The expressions of the Bible to this effect, whatever may have been the special occasion of their utterance, fall back on this first truth of reason, which must be as immutable as the being of God. Foreknowledge is, in strictness of speech, a compound idea. An analysis of it gives an *intention* and a *confidence* as all the truth in its contents. God knows things as they are, and in their real relations, and under their proper authorship and agency, and thus stands related to them in His own authorship and agency. His relations, in this respect, to other intelligences have analogies with their relations to each other; enough, certainly, to admit the proper sphere of each, and a perfect naturalness and appreciation in all things, of a personal individuality, electiveness, and accountability. The intelligent doctrine of cause in the finite

gives this as it does the appreciable idea of character and destiny there. There must be personality and a meeting and correlation of personal agencies. There must be an actual issue, and it must lie where character is formed and a destiny incurred. There must be intelligent reasons and issues to that destiny. The Divine economy is not an arbitrary prescription, or pageant. The judgment day and all probation will have a real significancy. The whole will be a reality and not a scenic representation, and its vitality lies in the doctrine of cause in the finite; personal cause, as the attribute and prerogative of intelligence, not less properly in the finite in its sphere, than in the Infinite in His. And the recognition of this, and that God is, and purposes, and acts, in an ever-present eternity, and that the relations of time have no significance in respect to Him, will contribute to the natural and easy apprehension of the truth in this matter. It is then obviously not necessary that He should arrange the wrong in the finite in order for it to be. It is by an economy of its own, and through a causation in itself, as personally considered. It need not be His economy of things in order for Him to encounter it, or to



encounter it successfully, and to glorify Himself in His counteraction of it. It need not be His method in order for Him to compete with and overcome it. Indeed, it could not be, for then antagonism to it, in Him, would be impossible. The Infinite knows, of course, what is in man, and in sinners, and in all the finite. He knows what is wrong in finite intelligences, but not as His method, for it is not, nor like Him. He knows it as their method and way as it really is, and opposed to His way and method. He knows it as such, and provides against it in the way that Infinite wisdom sees best. It is not true that nothing is that God would not have. All ungodliness, everything in any world that is wrong in the states, and purposes, and acts of His intelligent offspring, are that to which He is utterly opposed, and which is but an offence in His sight. This we know, for He has so informed us. And all difficulty in the subject would be exorcised if our philosophy would but allow that God speaks the truth, and the whole truth, in the premises, and that He is uttering, in passages referred to, the first truths of reason and the moral sense. To apprehend the direct and obvious bearings of this subject, we have only

to dismiss the gratuitous idea that the universe is but a physical unit, and God the only cause, and that all that transpires is but the transcript and exponent of His will, and needful to His happiness and supremacy. We have only to conceive the true ground of the felicity of God, and the method in which He is supreme ; that it is not by annihilating all proper cause, out of Himself, and destroying the distinction in the finite between persons and things—and that all is, through a process of correlation and antagonism, a commerce, a history in the finite, and a real issue of separate and legitimate personal intelligences, as elsewhere seen. We have only to grasp the features of a moral administration over intelligent beings, and to yield to mind those laws which are inherently its own. Who would treat a smitten conscience as he does a broken limb, or govern moral agency by the law of gravitation ? Moral government excludes physical force, except as the last resort. It has probation and retribution. The first is, in its very nature, incipient and incomplete, and takes issue in the last. The first is authority and righteousness, with moral and resistible appliances, as its leading type ; the last is right authority with co-

ercive methods and penalties. Moral government is not complete and final in the first. The elective character of probation forbids it, and shows its own integral reference to the last. All under probation is not according to the will of God. Its very nature and design would indicate that all might not be. If you have intelligence, as you must if anything, in a universe as a whole, you must have character and destiny, and if so, you must have probation and its incidents, and may have sin and wrong; and the doctrine of a simple almightiness in the way of prevention, is not in place in it, and would only repudiate and destroy it. That the will of God might not be fully met in a probationary economy, is a necessary idea concerning it. If all may be done up in probation, why have retribution, and how is that honorable and right? But more of this in another place. God does not see all His will accomplished by intelligent beings in probation. He ever moves in the direction of it, and of all right, and does all for it in others, that infinite wisdom dictates, and the limits of probation admit. But there will be much in this direction that will not be done. Much that is agreeable to the mind and heart of

God, will fail of accomplishment, and much transpire that He regards with abhorrence and lamentation, and that must be left for the strong arm of power, when all other methods have been exhausted, and when God rises reluctantly, but needfully, to do His "strange work." Intelligence is not a mere automaton, or moral government a movement among machines. The will of God *cannot* be the only *physical law* of intelligent action. This would concentrate all personality in himself, and be the most rigid of all systems of Pantheism. The liability of that which is counter to the will of God, lies in the very woof of a moral government. The ends of the Divine government are not gained by keeping out all wrong by physical force, which would, as remarked, be the annihilation of any such government in its probationary features, but by securing in all ways compatible with intelligence and probation, the ends of all righteousness, and giving eventual supremacy to it, and showing therein the mind and heart of God, as in the parable. This is inherently the method of all moral government, human or divine. These are its intrinsic features to the eye of reason, and by the showing of all truth. Must a wrong in the

child be the method, and on the whole, according to the will of the parent, in order for the parent to discipline and punish it, and bring honor on all righteousness in his family, by his ways of remedy and righteousness in relation to it? Would not the fact of this vacate all legitimate discipline on his part in the premises, and turn his attempts at government according to law, into a farce? Must the wrong-doer in society keep within its economy, and programme, and scope, in order that the ends of civil government may be answered, by "visiting his transgressions with a rod, and his iniquity with stripes"? The innate features of moral government are the same everywhere. They must be homologous, if God is one, and man is made in His image, and intelligence is everywhere and always itself, and not something else. And we have only to give these features, and this unity, free scope and expression in the Divine moral government, to render the discussion of our subject easy, simple, and natural. We are forced to no artificial limitation of sense in the terms we use,—no emasculation of our meanings is needful in running the parallel of the providence and purposes of God, or of His sayings and His

acts, and no exorcism of all truth and naturalness from our method, in speaking of His relations to sin and wrong. Sin is accounted for philosophically and abundantly under other auspices, and through an economy of its own, and averse from God. It is an outbreak in the finite, and is no way of God. He purposes what He does, and as He does in providence, and as His moral nature would lead us to anticipate,—such as His word would suggest and His heart endorse, and all righteousness demand of One holy and true. He is bringing good out of evil, not as having charge of both, or a common patronage of each, as His method; but in the only way possible, in the exercise of infinite wisdom, protecting and securing the one, and suppressing the other, and remedying its mischiefs, and eventually gathering all wrong out of His kingdom, and causing “the righteous to shine forth there as the sun,” forever and ever. Divine providence may have a judicial aspect, even in probation. Within the sphere of depravity it will. The incoming of sin modifies it. It will have adaptation to this element in the finite. It must, as there administered, be peculiar, and exhibit phases not elsewhere needful, or in place. It will interlock

with sin in all rightful and proper ways. As sin is not God's method, He is not responsible for it, and may exercise a righteous sovereignty in relation to it. He can meet it in judgment or in mercy, for He is not straitened in this. He may exercise His wrath upon it, or take occasion from its unwitting instrumentality to advance any good end,—may show His power in Pharaoh,—His goodness by the sojourn in Egypt,—make the Assyrian His scourge, and give up His Son into the hands of the wicked, saying, "This is your hour and the power of darkness," and in any and every way make sin entrap itself,—be for the instruction and warning of the intelligent universe, and by the energies of His recuperative providence and most holy will, God may evince the glory of His name, while He brings honor on all righteousness, and discomfiture on all wrong. This is the lesson we read in passages like the following, taken, almost without selection, from the Bible :

"But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels," &c. Psalm, 11 : 1, 12.

"Oh! that they were wise, that they under-

stood this, that they would consider their latter end." "How shall one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had sold them and the Lord had shut them up." —Deut. 32: 29, 30.

"Oh! that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea," &c.—Isaiah 48: 18.

"And they made a calf in those days, and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the work of their own hands. Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven," &c.—Acts 7: 41, 2. They were filled with the fruit of their own ways.

A further thought is in place here, in canvassing the Divine relations to wrong in moral government, and in learning the methods of the Infinite within the sphere of depravity. *Control* implies *antagonism*. It is not an integer in the impelling movement. It comes in from an opposite quarter. It is a method of its own from another direction. It is another economy, and a check on the main movement, that is not part of it, or necessary to it. In its nature it is counteraction; and however originated, is not of the



propelling force, and is designed as a rebutting influence on that on which it is exercised.

But the thought stops not here. - A thing done, is not the doing of it. An effect lies not in its cause. It is utterly different, and may lie in relations, and form part of an economy, of which its cause is no part, and in which it has no share. A man killed, is not the killing of him,—a house burned, is not the crime of arson. The *intent* to kill is murder, at the forum of the conscience and the bar of God, even when the actual death of a fellow-being *is* effected. One dies in the working of an economy utterly different from that in which murder is committed. The house burns down under laws, and through an economy utterly otherwise than those inherent in the crime of arson; and as an event, stretches on into relations and consequences which the culprit never contemplated and could not comprehend. An effect is not like its cause, or need not be. An event, as such, is without moral character. It is merely an effect, conditioned by its appropriate cause, but not of it, and in its onward connections, and ultimate ground, not comprehended by, and may be wholly foreign to its cause. All sin is of the nature of finite cause, and inheres

in it. It is, or can be nowhere else. An event which is resultant of it may be in changed relations an element of good,—may be translated into another economy, and be of it, and through a recuperative process and agency utterly diverse from that of *which* it is the effect, may be for good. I may use an event, and yet have no complacency in its cause, and no part in it. An event may be used to good purposes, when its cause is bad, and may become part of the economy of the Infinite when He rejects and repudiates its cause, and when the agencies and method through which it is accomplished, are utterly otherwise and different from His. His purposes and acts may take up that which is meant for evil, and make it for good. Much of His providence in this world is of this nature, and in control of the outbreak of sin might be expected to be. It is through an economy and agency of His own, distinct from that of sin and the sinner, and a method and purpose diverse and counteracting. It was so in respect to the sojourn in Egypt. His purposes and plans were not those of Joseph's brethren. His plan was of another kind, and lay in another direction. His thoughts were not those of the Assyrian, in

scourging Israel, or identical with them. "Howbeit he (the Assyrian) meaneth not so, neither doth His heart think so, but it is in His heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few." The two economies crop out also, in relation to the death of Christ, and it would be edifying to study the naturalness and accuracy with which they are presented in the concrete statements of the New Testament. Christ, in allusion to the methods of the wicked concerning it, says, "For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." "This is your hour and the power of darkness?"

God is not the only agent, nor is the Infinite the only sphere of moral agency, nor the methods of the Infinite the only methods of the moral sphere. There may be combination and coalescence of methods, in good or bad agents, and yet in the last analysis every agent has a method and purpose of his own, and which directly and primarily relates to his own acts, and which are solely his and of his own individual personality. Other agents may know what it is, approximately, as men do sometimes, or perfectly as God does always,—may influence or contravene it,—harmonize with, or antagonize against it,—may

use its results or conflict with them, and bring about their own ends out of them or in view of them, and each in a method of his own, and in a way characteristic of himself. But it is of the individuality of any moral agent that his method and purpose, and whatever lies within the sphere of his personal responsibility, and is of it, is his own exclusively, and not another's; and is self-originated in a personality of his own, which knows or admits of no other causation or prescription. Within this sphere in the finite lie all sin and wrong, and by limitation are excluded from being the methods, and purpose, and economy of the Infinite; and this position is broad enough in its application to meet the principle of every case and allegation that may be made on the subject.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE MORAL SENSE.

IT is impossible to appreciate the morality of the position which inaugurates sin and wrong as the method of the Infinite, and a primordial element in His arrangement of a universe, and as being thus in accordance with His will. There is, moreover, a *double-entendre* in it that offends all our moral convictions. Test this in any single instance, as the whole principle and difficulty lie inherently in any specification. Take the first human transgression as narrated in the account of the fall. Knowing the liabilities of finite intelligence, it is accountable to us, and of His own paternal goodness and fidelity, that God should set life and death explicitly before Adam, and the terms thereof, and solemnly, and with all the authority of the Jehovah, prohibit transgression, and attend the announcement and prohibition with all the sanctions that a

creature thus situated could appreciate. Thus far, all is accordant with reason and our innate moral convictions. But connect with this prohibition the idea that it was of God that Adam should sin, and that his sinning was but the fulfilment of God's "decretive will" concerning him, that it lay in the primordial plan and purpose of God in reference to him, and was one of the divinely-arranged steps for carrying out God's great end in all things, and thus, on the whole, the best way,—ah! indeed God's own perfect way for him; and you take all vitality out of the inhibition, and all appreciable morality out of the part enacted by the Most High in the premises. The moral sense will not fraternize with it. You instinctively say, it is not God-like; it is intuitively impossible. God could not be in such contradictory relations to the same moral question,—could not forbid His purposed will, in the declarations of His mouth. He could not inhibit the fulfilment of His own plan of things, and utter the penalties of His displeasure on the execution of that which, in the largest and best sense, was according to His mind and will. Setting aside the inherent incompatibility, yea, impossibility of God's plan-

ning that which is innately wrong and sinful, no morality will live in the relations here stated. May one purpose that which is wrong and then forbid it?—Inhibit the execution of his own plan of things?—Refuse that overt reality for which his plan is, and in which is its vitality and value? May one be on both sides of a moral question, and be both proponent and repellant in the same moral issue? The innate sense revolts, and we necessarily affirm it incompatible with all unity and all morality of being. It is, if anything, more gross and incongruous in the Infinite, than in the finite. The Infinite asks no plea of necessity or temptation. God's every thought, and purpose, and method, and movement are perfect in righteousness, and no forced subjection to an imperfect or wrong method is conceivable in the premises. The scale of morality is the same in the Infinite as in the finite; if not, how can we ascribe moral qualities at all to God? How know that He is good or has perfections at all? But for a common line of admeasurement, and one that we know, and could use, how could we appreciate a divine attribute, or any divine communication on the subject? Of this identity and the legitimacy of this meth-

od of appreciation of what God is, and will do, we are fully assured in the oft-repeated references of His word: "Come let us reason together, saith the Lord." "Are not my ways equal, saith the Lord, and are not your ways unequal?" "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" These divine appeals to our innate moral convictions, show indubitably that these convictions should not be ignored in stating God's relations to sin; and as these convictions cannot but be shocked to the utmost by the position that He is the proponent of sin in the universe, and has constituted it as His method of a moral system, we must view them as strongly evincive of the truth in this matter, and decidedly conclusive in favor of the view here taken.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE VERDICT OF COMMON SENSE.

**R**ELIGION is a first truth of all intelligence. It is of the reason of God and of the reason of man; its statements will fulfil the terms of reason and the dictates of common sense. Take this subject, then, into the arena of everyday life,—to the fireside, the social circle, or to the marts of business and commerce. What should we think of one who should be known as the antagonist of his own plans and arrangements, and the repudiator of his own method of things?—who should forbid the execution of his own decrees, and have a secret will, quite the reverse of all his published law and requirements?—who should present one phase of desire, and moral government, on the front of the canvas and quite another and opposite one in the back-ground? We could not respect him. We should account him “as double-minded and un-

stable in all his ways." We should, indeed, look upon the whole matter as solecistic and inappreciable, and only say the thing cannot be. It is as well the denial of all unity and consistency of being, as of all possibility of virtue. Character could not attach to such an one. The two relations to the same thing would not only neutralize each other, but be destructive of all personal individuality and intelligence in the case. The solecism is equally palpable in the Infinite as in the finite. It is destructive of all determination in the perfections of God, and all unity in His moral being. It leaves Him equally without character and without strength, checkmated by His irreconcilable relations to wrong, and His common patronage of good and evil. The common sense of men will not appreciate it as a truth, or reconcile it with any practical maxim, or any possible principle of belief. It can be harmonized with no law of the intelligence, and no ground of conviction and acceptance in the human mind. Men will only say, in utmost deference to the position, that, if it be *divinity*, it is not common sense; that if a dogma of theology, it is one that never should be preached; and that if dispensed from the pulpit, it can never

be accredited in the pew. It can but be enigmatical to the common mind. As correlated with the necessary apprehensions and promptings of the intelligence in all the relations and intercourse of men, it must be regarded as an impracticable doctrine, foreign alike to all the deductions of wisdom and thought, and all the convictions of morality, as elsewhere applied. This has been its sad agency hitherto. Error and scepticism have had their strongholds beneath its covert, and to this day make it their defense and their point of attack on the real and the true, in systems of evangelical belief.

But Divine truth is correlated with the moral sentiments. Religion has its plea in the constituent elements of our being. Reason, conscience, and common sense, do not ignore its communications or repudiate its doctrines. The Bible is adapted to the perfection of mind, and has a legitimate ministry in its utmost development. That cannot be true which must vacate all its necessary first-truths, and live only in the denial of its innate principles of thought and action.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE TESTIMONY OF THE BIBLE.

THIS testimony is unique and characteristic—  
“*in thesei*” and in the concrete. It is given negatively and positively. It is clear, and unembarrassed, and uncompromising, and every way in harmony with the dictates of reason and the moral sense. We may take this testimony in detail, or as classified under the various topics of revelation, and in every variety of relationship to them. Everywhere it is homogeneous and unequivocal. If God forbade sin at first, and planted His curse on its inception, He grieved over its riper development, and “because of it repented that he had made man upon the earth.” Hence the deluge, and the cleansing of the earth of its guilty inhabitants, as the testimony and the method of His displeasure against the being and prevalence of sin, and the spirit of misrule that had become rife among

men. This antagonism to sin, and rebuke and repudiation of it, as in no sense of Him or agreeable to His will, has been the one chapter of His earthly providence from the first, as detailed in His word. Time would fail to record this testimony, and I need not. It is the living expression of the *Book* which God has given us, as embodied in its warnings against sin,—its mementos of the wrath of God on account of sin, and its foreshowing of a righteous retribution, in its types and ceremonial purifications,—in its remedy for sin, and its terms of mercy,—in its calls to repentance, and its delight in virtue,—in the precepts and sanctions of law, and in the promises and rewards of the gospel,—in the asserted conformity of all righteousness to the being and moral nature of God, and the exhortations founded on it. “The Lord hath made all for himself,” and perfectly to love, and obey, and enjoy Him, and allotted “the day of evil for the wicked.” “Be ye holy for I am holy, saith the Lord.” “Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” All is unique and transparent as sun-light. It betrays no need of sin, and no endorsement of it as the Divine method of the universe, or as being in any way of God.

Such a sentiment *there* would discredit the Bible, and we should throw it to the winds as unworthy of God, and incapable of being from Him.

## TWO REMARKS.

I protract the argument, but for two concise remarks further :

1. *If sin be of God, a remedy for it is absurd and impossible.* God's way is perfect. His method and purpose are in themselves complete in all righteousness. His arrangements, and ordinations, and appointments are characteristically of Him, and like Him, and are made for the sake of their execution, and as promotive of His great end in all things; and if sin and wrong are among them, and, equally with all else, integrant in the primordial arrangement and ongoing method of the Deity in the prosecution of that end, then are they, as thus arranged, the best possible, and a perfect way. And if this be so, how can anything else be better? How can these features of an ongoing Divine economy be remedied? Does that which is perfect admit of remedy? Can you heal health, or straighten straightness? Does not God's own method please Him? And if all that is, is that method,

why alter or remedy it? If all is of God, and in the largest and best sense is as He would have it, and a transcript of His mind and will; why speak of remedy for it in any respect, or seek its cure. If sin is of God, the gospel is a solecism and a taunt. If sin is of God, then is it a snare, and a plot of the Infinite, to show His skill in managing it. It is a wrong way for the sake of a right one,—an intrinsic wrong for the sake of intrinsic righteousness. It is God denying Himself, and descending to an unworthiness, that He may appear the better for the contrast. So utterly absurd is the idea that sin is the way and method of the Deity, and in any sense a matter of His arrangement and proposition; so utterly impossible is it that God should plan, or ordain, or decree, or purpose, or be the proponent of an economy of wrong. The convictions of the moral sense on this subject are a first-truth. They are God's decision of this question, in our being and His own. On the last analysis there must be two economies, two plans, at least two methods in themselves independent and diverse, and in direct opposition to each other, and which, as plans and methods, have nothing in common with each other, if there is sin; and the

Saviour has them in the parable. The old Dualistic scheme was doubtless absurd in most respects, but it sprang from an honest impulse, and was an effort after truth, and was, at least, so far authentic and justified, as to find a plan and a method in the finite, which is not of God.

2. *The position that sin is of the arrangement, and according to the "decretive will" of God, is of no account for the purpose, for the sake of which it is held.* An arrangement simply, has no power. A method in itself merely, is not a cause. It must be of the nature of an executive act. An element of vitality, in real being, must be supplied to a decree for the existence of anything, to give realization to the subject matter of the decree, or any efficiency to it. The decreeing of all the sin of earth and hell, secures none of it. There is no necessary connection between a design and the actual being of the thing designed.

You gain nothing as to the actual being of a universe in the forming of its plan. Another link must be supplied in order to make the plan efficacious. It must become a cause, in its own behalf and that of its author, in execution of its behests. God must somewhere stand in the re-



lation of cause to sin, or a decree of it by Him avails nothing. The sin in its actuality stands in no connection with His decree of it, unless He institute that connection and give it vitality. Dr. Emmons took this matter to its last analysis and its only legitimate issue. He held that God is the "*efficient cause*" of sin, and equally an agent in respect to it, as in respect to holiness, and thus inaugurated sin as the perfect method of the Absolute. All this we must adopt, or give up as useless the position that sin is of the arrangement and method of God. The plot must be carried out, the game must be played through, the pageant must transpire, and Dr. E. was shrewd and consistent enough to see that the doctrine of Divine efficiency in the production of moral evil was its only interpretation and result. If God *does* nothing more for sin than decree its existence, that decree in the premises avails no more than a knowledge as to the actual being of the subject matter of it, (and omniscience is an admitted attribute of the Deity.) Our redemption from all this is in the doctrine of finite cause, and it is our only redemption, and it is every way competent and reliable. It is in the element of real cause, which resides as in-

herently in finite intelligence as in the Infinite. It is in the living, personal individuality, and its method originating in the finite and of it, and is distinct from that of God, and discordant and averse from it when in the wrong. And this brings us at once, and happily, to the first truths of reason, and conscience, and common sense, which, on these subjects, are the legitimate exponents of all philosophy and truth.

Thus, then, in completion of the direct, chief discussion, and in one word;—Reason declares that moral evil cannot be from God, as the perfections and method of the Infinite exclude it thence; it is fully and philosophically accounted for in the finite, both as a method and a fact, while the appropriate features of moral government,—the moral convictions of our own spirit,—the teachings of common sense and the Bible, admit of, and locate it there. These bear a uniform consent of testimony, and array the whole economy of God relating to sin in uncompromising and untiring antagonism against it, and exhibit the glory of God and the good of the universe as lying in the line of the discomfiture of sin in all the methods of a moral government, both in probation and retribution, to its

complete, eventual overthrow, and the final triumph of all morality and righteousness—all goodness and truth.

I turn to the *consideration of objections* to the view here taken, and to a concise enumeration of its advantages.

## CHAPTER IX.

### OBJECTIONS.

ALL objections worthy of the name may be grouped under the three following heads of inquiry: *Does not the Infinite comprehend the finite? Cannot God prevent sin? On what principles is based religious submission to all events?*

1. DOES NOT THE INFINITE COMPREHEND THE FINITE in its being, its law and its acts, and so comprehend it, that it is, as it is, through a Divine election, and so that it would not be as it is, or its acts as they are, if not on the whole a matter of Divine election, or on the great scale of being in accordance with the will of God, and of His purpose and method? All this would be true in a merely physical system, and is so in the present, as God made it. And it embraces the mighty facts of the universe, in its numberless assemblage of worlds and systems, in their

creation, movements, and destinies. All that in which God is sole cause, and where finite cause reaches not. Will is the only cause known, or possible. The Infinite will and intelligence in its sphere, and finite will and intelligence in its sphere. And this doctrine of the comprehension of the Infinite, and the absorption of all cause and all movement in God, and the energies of His own will, obtains where He is sole cause; but it fails to catch the real features of a moral economy, as related to intelligence, and will, and cause in the finite. "*That* is in His image and after His likeness," and has in its being, as properly as God has, the prerogative of personal cause, and has its sphere of agency and self-originated action as truly as God has; and the methods of the Infinite, within the sphere of finite intelligence or as related to it, are respective of the element of cause which is in it, and is inherently of it. Here the exception taken above is in error. But its ground is deeper still, and farther back, and must find its solution in the combination of another thought with that already presented. It falls into the error, in respect to intelligence and its creation in the finite, which is contained in the idea of a choice

of systems. It forgets that God's way is perfect, and that intelligence is the perfection of the finite, and God's own likeness in it,—that God is a power in the direction of His own being and intelligence, and that while, whatever is created and conditioned by Him must be in the finite, there could be no object in creation, without intelligence there, in the likeness of God, and in correspondence with Him, and that finite intelligence takes there its necessarily inherent elements and prerogatives. Conceive, if you can, of an object to the Divine mind, for an actual creation, without intelligent beings as the crowning work in it, to whom it is adjunct, and for whom and whose benefit and use, under God, it is made,—intelligent beings, without whom and whose communion and fellowship with the Creator, as the objects of His paternal care and goodness, and the conscious recipients of His love, and reciprocators of all moral relations and all the manifested glory of God, creation might as well not have been. It could have no correspondence with its Author. It would have been but a thing. It could not know God, or love or praise Him. It would be *merely* an effect, and might as well have been a contemplation in

the Divine mind, as an existence out of it. Imperfection and wrong, conceived as a Divine method, supply not the conditions of a Divine activity. And it is the glory of God that it is so. All righteousness and all perfection are the necessary method of the Infinite. God can have no motive to do otherwise, and hence His work in creation, with intelligent beings at its head, is a *perfect work*, and, with *that element there*, such as the all perfect Infinite will have.

But intelligence is personality and personal cause "*per se*," and, as above suggested, with a method, and action, and conduct, and character of its own, and of its own origination, and which, in its sphere, is as truly its own and not another's, as is that of God Himself in His. How could it be otherwise, since it is made in His image and after His likeness? How otherwise can it be viewed when God treats it as such, and goes into correspondence with it on the principle of a strict personality and personal cause, and when every dictate of our own self-consciousness shows the same? This being so, and an existence being given us, such as alone it could be, and be an intelligent one, we are henceforth persons, and responsible cause in

ourselves, and the Divine relations to us are different from what they are to a merely physical creation, or to that which is *only a thing*, and whose whole being and relations are simply that of an effect; and hence His method of government over us is different. It is respective of the element of cause that is in us, and regards the necessary nature of it. It is not comprehended in the attribute of physical power, nor primarily of it. It is in accordance with mental laws and the reciprocities and behests of distinct, rational existence. It is not in the way of identity of method and act, and inhering complicity of being, but in the relation of separate personalities. It recognizes the spiritual imperative that is in us, and is consistent with its legitimate workings, in the right of an intelligent agency. Its type is seen in the reciprocal relations of other intelligent beings, and is, as must be, the method of intercourse between one complete agent and personal being and another, and as must be all government in the premises. It is by instruction, and the influence of truth and its commerce with the faculties of our being, according to the laws of all intelligence, and not by the absorption of our individuality



in that of God, or any such pantheism of the universe as the vitality of the objection demands. It is such as renders legitimate all the methods of the Revelation which is given us, and all that destiny to which we are bound. Divine government over us, and God's plan and method in respect to us, are His own and distinct from ours. It is His personalty in distinction from ours, and often in contrast and in diametrical opposition to ours, and is exhausted there. God knows what is in man, for omniscience is an inherent perfection of the Infinite. But He knows it, not necessarily as His own plan and causation, but as ours, as it is in truth,—not with approbation, necessarily, as His own purpose and arrangement, but it may be with utmost abhorrence; not as fulfilling His plan, but in opposition to it; not as needful to the good of the universe, but in derogation of it; not as coinciding with or conducive to His great end in all things, but utterly irrespective of it. Comprehending the finite in a sphere of intelligent, moral existence, is then quite different from being the *only cause* and agent in it, and having all its methods, and plans, and personal issues but the reflection and a transcript of those of the Infinite, and all, in

some large sense or in any sense, as God would have them, necessarily. It is by response to, in correlation or conflict with, or a Divine control over, the personal agencies of the finite, securing His glory and great end out of them, and notwithstanding them, and through a method of His own, and unlike and diverse from those in the finite and in a way such as all consciousness shows that moral government must of necessity be, and as everywhere spread on the face of the Word of God.

2. BUT CANNOT GOD PREVENT ALL SIN CONSISTENTLY WITH FREEDOM IN FINITE INTELLIGENCES. This is, in some respects, another question than whether sin and wrong are the plan and purpose of God, and inhere in the divinely-proposed method of the universe. It may, however, come under the same general category. The "*animus*" of this inquiry lies very much in the errors brought under review in the foreground of the essay, and so far it is irrelevant, and out of the question. That God can annihilate intelligent creatures, is doubtless true. But while they are in being, they are of necessity free and elective in their acts, and capable of right and wrong. Whether the nature and provisions of moral government

are such that God can, under all circumstances, and always, prevent wrong voluntary action in the finite, it remaining intelligent and free, *admits of question*. The issue here put is itself, on such a subject, anomalous and out of place. Certain it is, that God will vindicate himself to all goodness and righteousness in the matter of wrong in the finite, and do all that infinite wisdom and benevolence suggest in the premises, if not all indeed that the inherent relations of the subject admit of. And yet it is equally certain from fact and revelation, that he does not keep all sin out, and never will. If God is not the proponent of sin in the universe, and it comes in through other agencies, and other methods than His, and if it is in no sense of Him, He has a wider margin of discretion in respect to it than otherwise. He may say to those whose economy it is, "look ye to it." He may let it work out its own problems,—bring on its own mischiefs, and self-annoyances, and discomfitures, and thus be as a beacon-light to both the un-fallen and the ransomed in ways in which He could not, if it were a gratuitous method of His own, as the initial and normal state of the universe in the mind of the Infinite. He has

warned, advised, instructed, and laid deep in the very being of finite intelligence, a spiritual imperative to right action like His own; and now, if any individuals, or races, in any few or more worlds among the unnumbered ranks of the finite, break in upon the order of the universe, and debase themselves and dishonor God by sinning against Him; the responsibility is theirs and not His. His relations are all antagonistic to such an outbreak. He has mainly to watch His own interests, and those of His kingdom, against the foe, and take His own time and way "to put down all rule, and all authority, and power, that exalts itself against Him, and every enemy." If finite intelligence has its prerogative, it has its responsibility too. And God may apply the principle of deserts,—let sin punish its abettors, and let them "fall into the pit which they have digged, and be filled with the fruit of their own ways," and thus let sin work for instruction to others, and be for warning to the universe to stand in awe of it and its evils, and thus cause the wrath of man to praise God as He could not if that wrath and sin were His own way and purpose, and but the method of His decretive will. What would then be a mere

pageant,—yea, would present God in intrinsically wrong and impossible relations to sin, and would, if possible, put Him in the position of the most direct and highest responsibility for sin, and its manner, and amount, and mischiefs, and necessitate it to be in all respects just as He would have it, and the best thing possible in its place, and, indeed, wholly the absolutely perfect way of the Infinite; is now another's responsibility, while God's relations to it are those of a pure and right being, who will not choose a wrong method, and whose prerogative it is to limit, remedy, and punish such a method in others, and see to the interests of all righteousness notwithstanding it.

Whether, then, as an abstract question, God can prevent all sin, is not an inquiry of much relevancy or value. God works in the concrete, and will proceed in the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness to the end of putting down sin, and will do all under each dispensation that is appropriate under it in this behalf. What is not appropriate and cannot be done under a probation of goodness and grace, will be met on the terms of a righteous retribution, in which will mingle the element of physical coercive power.

If all could be issued without such a resort, we might expect it would be. But as it will not be, it is fair to conclude that the agencies of probation, and mercy, and moral influence, may be exhausted without preventing all sin. There is a principle of generic truth lying in the bosom of passages like the following :

“ What more could I have done for my vineyard, that I have not done in it, saith the Lord, wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ?”  
“ How shall I give thee up, Ephraim ? how shall I deliver thee, Israel ? how shall I make thee as Admah, and set thee as Zeboim ?” You find it in that judicial providence concerning Pharaoh, in the blindness of the Jews,—in the unpardonable sin ; and in the cutting off of the Jews, for a time, from their position as the chosen people of God. There is a spot where mercy must stop, and probation cease,—where gracious appliances are no more appropriate, and where moral means and government change to retribution. A probationary economy is necessarily incomplete. You must have it if you put the finite on trial for character ; and that you must do in a moral economy. But it is only part of

a whole. It is, in its nature, incipient, and not final. It looks on to that which lies beyond it. It is the entrance upon a moral economy, but not its completion. And hence it is unmeaning as a finality, and the question irrelevant, as before stated, which asks if moral means may not always avail, and probation be, within itself, a perfected economy, and of itself perfect all right issues. If this were not a solecism, and probation could do this, and God were sincere in it, we might expect it would, and retribution be uncalled for, and out of place. That is God's "strange work," and as a last resort. He does not take it up "*con amore*," and would not betake Himself needlessly to it. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that he turn from his way and live." Retribution is, and must be, by way of a resultant process to crush that which cannot be cured,—to put down by the arm of righteous force, what will not yield to probationary methods, as Infinite wisdom uses them, "To gather the tares together in bundles to burn them," "To gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those that do iniquity, and cast them into a furnace of fire." It is in the way of a

dernier and necessary resort, when and where the means appropriate to probation have been tried and have failed. And this is enough to satisfy reason and common sense, whatever point of metaphysical casuistry may be raised on the abstract and irrelevant question of Divine power. What God can, in the concrete, do in the way of mercy and recovery from sin in a probationary economy, He will, and what probation does not effect in this behalf, retribution will. "For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet, and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that did put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."—1. Cor. 15 : 25. The vice of old theories, as already suggested, and the source of all difficulty wrought into this whole subject, lie in the attempt to give a good and justifiable reason for the existence of sin, whereas there is no such reason. From the nature of the case there cannot be. If God's law is right, a good reason cannot be given for the infraction of it. Sin cannot be in an intrinsically right economy, for it is intrinsically wrong. All virtue and morality discard it. The Infinite repudiates it. It is but an invasion of



His rights, a resistance of His will, and is, or can be, of right nowhere. It could not be an integer in a righteous system, or a coöperative agent in it. How regulate a cancer so as to make it the method of life and health, and a constituent element thereof. As well regulate wrong as integrally in an economy of right. The idea is simply preposterous and absurd. Sin is not of its system and economy, and can but be the work of an enemy.

*But why not destroy recreant intelligence,* and conserve the interests of the universe in that way? I know not why the work of God should be destroyed, "in destroying the works of the devil," or of man. Intelligence itself is the perfect way of the Infinite, and a subordinate universe correlative to intelligence. Nothing else could be better—nothing else could be. We know not that one atom of matter will ever be destroyed. The destruction of intelligence would be the destruction of that which "is made in God's own image," and would be but the repudiation of His own perfect way, and of that which, in the Hebrew superlative, He pronounces "very good." Hence the annihilation of finite intelligences in view of foreseen wrong in them, if

such a category could be instituted, as applying to the Infinite, could not be; as it would be no part of a moral administration, and avail nothing in the way of moral discipline or virtue, and would not be the method of the Infinite in dealing with wrong. Annihilation of God's work is no Divine method in disposing of the accretions of human or angelic history; and thus we have no evidence from fact or Revelation that it will be the Divine way in putting down sin, and securing the ends of the Creator. Before demanding *that*, and pleading the failure of the existing economy of God and of virtue, we must be able to look to the end thereof, as in the parable, and we are not there yet.

But these thoughts are also germane to the solution of our whole problem, and are indicative of it in the relation of all specific to all generic truth. As sin is not a Divine method, and as God is not responsible for it, or its effects,—as it is by another's hand, and through another economy than that of God; its mischiefs are thus superinduced, and may be thus referred, and we can thus account for the historic developments of sin in this world, without implicating the “principles of honor and right in the Deity.”

We need not, we should not, impute to God "the works of the Devil." Whatever sin is, or its nature, or tendency, or effects in any world, on the individual or the race, it is not God's economy, and all Divine influences are athwart of it, and in mitigation, and amendment, and remedy of its evils. Grant that it does bring "death into the world, and all our woe,"—that it tends to perpetuate its effects, and entails unnumbered ills on the successive generations of men,—that it has a generic nature, and man a generic character even,—that body and soul are impregnated with the "*virus*" of its influence,—that it introduces an economy of wrong, "descending by ordinary generation" from parent to child, and conceded, if you will, all that bias to sin which may be called the hereditary proclivity of the race,—that sin has shut out the light and life of God from the earth, and brought in heathenism over it, and every form of pollution, and error, and crime, and folly, and wretchedness, as the native heirship of man; is it of God? Is it His perfect way, and is He responsible for it? No, no,—a thousand times, no, I again answer. Does He not lament it infinitely more than we do, as in His word? And is He

not bringing in all the agencies of Infinite wisdom and goodness to operate against it? Are not His ensigns of instruction and warning hung out from high heaven against it, and by His providence and His word does He not come to the rescue? Does He not command us, as His coadjutors, to preach everywhere and "to every creature," the remedy of grace,—a command which, if better obeyed, would be more efficient in the accomplishment of His will? Is He not sustaining providence for the sake of redemption; and in the exercise of a righteous and gracious sovereignty, treating sin like the tares of the field, till the harvest of the world is ripe? Dr. Beecher can better solve his difficulties by the issue here made, than by the hypothesis he invents, and which it is hoped he has, on further reflection, abandoned. That which he propounded, is without evidence and without efficacy. This is scriptural and complete, and within the sphere of humanity and consciousness. It harmonizes truth in the abstract, with it in the concrete, and gives vitality to all Divine communications to us, in the Word of God and in the person of His Son. The solution of our whole problem is here brought well-nigh to a

point, and is gained in the analysis of any one wrong act in ourselves. We intuitively feel that its authorship and method are ours, and that it is against God and His method and will, and is deserving only of His curse,—that it meets His displeasure, and that He justly may leave us to all its consequences, and will thus leave us unless rescued by grace from the prevalence and effects of sin. This sentiment is no fiction. It is according to truth,—is obviously of all truth in its metaphysical statement, as in its concrete and historic relations. It is a first truth of reason, and quadrates with the eternal truth of God and the universe.

I care not, so far as the principle of “honor and right” in the Deity are concerned, what are the direct tendencies and results of sin. “An enemy hath done it.” It is not the work of God, or any way responsibly to Him, resultant of His economy. It had His inhibition at first. He deluged one world by reason of it, and has set the beacon-lights of His displeasure against it, on every hill-top and in every valley. He has shown His “*caveat*” against it in the spiritual imperatives of His being and of our own, and met it in all the methods of an antagonizing provi-

dence, and in the full resources of His word, and name, and Spirit, in all the relations of the Infinite to that intelligence which He "made upright, but which has sought many inventions." And the end is not yet. Probation will yet accomplish great things,—very great things in this behalf, as seen in the light of prophecy, and then retribution and eternity will consummate the issue.

3. HOW, THEN, IS SUBMISSION TO WHATEVER TAKES PLACE, CONSISTENT AND A DUTY? It is not, to what is essential moral wrong. God is not reconciled to it, neither does he require us to be. Events as such, have no moral character. They are but effects. All sin and moral wrong is of the nature of agency and cause, and is found in the activities of the personal will in intelligent creatures.

I have a refractory animal. His refractoriness is not of my procuring, or to my mind, and yet it is my province, if I can, to put him in gearings that shall render it harmless, and even cause his chafing to turn some wheel that is needful or useful; and while I tame him, thereby I turn his bad mettle to account. His vicious temper is *his* way and not mine, and I take any method my wisdom suggests to get it out of him, or to

serve myself by means of him with it in. We do the same within the sphere of moral agency. The culprit shall peck stones in the street, or grind in the mill; but his and not ours was the economy that brought him to the prison-house. We will make the best we can of him, and even use him, if it may be, in our effort to repair the injuries his sins have wrought. Illustrations like these may be of use in bringing out, at this point, the appropriate features of our subject. There are two kingdoms in the moral sphere,—the kingdom of God and “the kingdom of the Devil” and his adherents. They are not identical, but exclusive of each other. Christ does not cast out devils by Beelzebub, nor does Beelzebub retain them according to the will of God. There are, in this sphere, two agencies,—two economies,—that of God, and that of the evil one. They are not correlates, or inclusive of each other. They are from different directions,—of diverse nature, and aim, and tendency. Each is self-originated with all the elements of distinct personal cause,—characteristic and discordant from that of the other. God is the author of all being, but not of all agency under it. That agency which is wrong, originates in apos-

tasy from God, and is not of Him. Its personal actual sphere is that in which he has no communion and no part. He is not the designer of the wicked designs of the wicked, nor the purposer of their purposes. He meets them in their issue with His own wise designs, and His conflicting and independent agency; and by a method of influence and of agency wholly His own, secures good from evil, and brings order out of confusion, and light out of darkness. We must discriminate between a moral sphere and that which is merely physical,—between the distinct, self-originating personality of the one, and the “*vis inertia*” of the other,—must give to each moral agent the proper prerogatives of cause and of the authorship of his own purposes, and plans, and acts,—to God that of omniscience, and the authorship of what He does,—to the devil and all evil agents, that of what they do, and thus bring ourselves on to the ground of the parable of the tares, as before referred to, and allow the Saviour to be uttering there the first truths of reason as developed in the concrete of being and consciousness, and then there could not be much difficulty in catching the appropriate features of the subject, as presented in



the Bible, and in the teachings of the moral sense. As already stated, truth in theory should coalesce with truth in practice. The abstract is but the comprehensive and philosophic record of the concrete, and is of use only for its sake.

An event may occur, through complex, diverse, and even conflicting agencies. It may be resultant of one agency and method, and be used in another. We are familiar with this everywhere. An effect has not, needfully, the moral equalities of its cause, and is properly without moral quality. It may have relations not generated in its cause, or recognized there, or embraced in the economy that caused it. No finite cause, probably, comprehends all the relations of any one event. An omniscient being sees them in their true relations as caused, and in their intrinsic nature and inherent tendencies. God may turn to good account that which occurs in an economy of wrong, and, through an economy of His own, disarm it of its mischief, and give it a ministry of good. This is His prerogative, and this he does constantly in His contest with sin and wrong. And just here lies the ground of submission to the mischief and wrong that sin brings on us and into the universe. It

is not because everything that is, is a good "*per se*," and as caused, or is necessarily the best thing in its place, simply and directly because *it is there*, and not something else, but because there is a righteous God who discriminates in respect to what is. It is in the recuperative energies of His will and administration, who, in a distinctive method of His own, brings good out of evil, and makes "All things to work together for good to them that love Him." "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," and its works, as such, may claim from us no resignation. If there were no God in contest with wrong, and prevalent in the issue for all right and good, there could be no intelligent submission to the effects of sin. Resignation to sin and crime is now a misnomer and an absurdity. We need not and cannot be resigned to wrong, either as an act or a method. We submit to an event occurring through an economy of wrong, as we look upon it in the light of what God will do in respect to it, and with us in view of it, as He takes it up into Divine relations and in an economy of His own, as bearing upon it, comes to the rescue of innocence and virtue, and at length brings out all righteous-

ness as related thereto, resplendent like the sun in the firmament of heaven. Facts in their occurrence, and as related to their causes, are not all of God, or according to His will. He has influence over mind, but He will never use that influence in the direction of its wrong action. "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." We do wrong and commit all the wickedness chargeable to us under other auspices and influences. They are from "the father of lies,"—other sinning agents; and our "own hearts' lusts." Submission to wrongs, and injuries, and insults, to violence, and loss, and harm, through the plottings of the wicked, is not directly (I repeat) because these things are, but because God is, and in a way of His own supplies an antidote, brings good out of evil, and through a method independent of the sinner, works our good under these events, and makes them among the all things that conserve the good of the godly. You take the issue beyond the economy that caused the deed, and out of its causal relations, and into relationship with the economy of God, and to its relations as changed therein, and to the sufficiency of God's wisdom, and power, and love to do good thereby,

before you say, "Father, thy will be done," or feel any confidence that the interests of the universe are safe.

There is in the case a real metamorphosis of the facts and results of wrong agency, and their transference from the economy and spirit in which they originated and were wrought, into another economy and other relations under the Divine mind and hand in His ever-extant and discretionary providence. As related to the finite, they are wrong and hurtful; as taken up in the wisdom and discretion of the Infinite, they bespeak our submission and trust, and that, not so much for what they are, as for what God will do in respect to them. My child is murdered. Do I rejoice in the act, and thank the fiend who did it? Or while my eye rests with unmingled sorrow and regret upon the act as related to its author, do I transfer the deed to relations not in the economy or knowledge of its author,—to what God can and will do with it, in an economy of His own, brought to bear upon it for my instruction and benefit, and that of others, do I bow and confide? I say again: It is not for the intrinsic features of the deed, as characterized in its execution, or re-

lated to its causation, but for what God will do with it, and for me in view of it, out of the resources of His wisdom and grace, and in the way of consolation, discipline, and virtue, that I submit; and in this view it is, and under these changed relations of the deed, that while I yield the murderer to the gallows, for his crime, I hope and believe that all events shall work for the good of the godly. The two economies appear in the sojourn in Egypt, and in the death of Christ, and in the reference to these and like events in the Bible. Each economy was complete in its own way, and in its own distinctive authorship. God did not decree the envy of Joseph's brethren, nor the malice and wickedness of the Jews. The two economies met in the same issue, from different directions,—for different reasons,—to different ends and in a different spirit, and had in themselves nothing in common. The death of Christ viewed in the respect of its causation and of the agencies which conspired and compassed it, was a wicked and disastrous wrong,—a blood-thirsty and cruel murder,—a crime which appalled the hearts of beholders, and hung the heavens and the earth in sackcloth. So we always regard it, and speak

of it. But viewed in its Divine relations, and as taken up into the economy of God, the death of Christ is the life of the world. God purposed what He did in the premises, and the murderous Jews what they did. God no more purposed their agency in the matter, than they His. The event, which was resultant of their wickedness, He turns to account, as He is wont to do in such contingencies,—the wickedness itself was in no sense of Him. It was wrought under other auspices, through other instigations, and in the service of another master. I repeat,—a thing done is not the doing of it—an effect is not in its cause. It may have relations to an economy of which its cause is no part, and with which it has no consent or agreement. And all the terms of this position are graphically met in the most comprehensive statement left us of the death of Christ on the inspired record: “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken and with wicked hands have crucified and slain.” The same reference is observable in the devout congratulations of the disciples (Acts, 4; 23–30) as they beheld this wickedness, determining itself, though unwittingly, on the recorded and

benevolent councils of God, and they gained strength for prayer and conflict as they saw it thus correlated. An effect may lie in an economy in which its cause does not. Omniscience may apprehend its cause in its own proper economy and under its own appropriate auspices, and know what it will do, and so interlock with it in His plans, and purposes, and providence, as to bring good out of evil and order out of confusion, and secure a supremacy over evil to His own great ends in creation.

An event is not identical with a purpose. The term, purpose, is given to an event, only by a figure of speech, in which the thing purposed takes the name of the intention that it shall be. A purpose is the mental condition and forecast of an intelligent act,—the state of the will and intelligence in the performance of an act. Events, as such, are outside of the sphere of morality. They belong, properly, in the category of all physics. All morality resides in that which is cause,—and all cause is personal cause, and resides inherently in all intelligence. So that whatever disposition we make of events, and however we collate them in their connections with the ongoing and destinies of the universe ;

we do nothing necessarily toward "UNIFYING" the economies, or agencies, or responsibilities under which they take place.

And there is vitality and value in this feature of the discussion, and this disintegration of the characteristics and relations of wrong doing. It comes from the very life of it, and describes it. This is the instruction of the moral sense. Reason sustains it,—philosophy demands it in its analysis of the relation between a purpose and its author. It is legitimately resultant of the truth that all free agency is cause, and has its own method and responsibility, and acts from purposes fully its own and not another's; while it justifies the relations of God to wrong, both in His method and His acts, and as seen in reason, and everywhere impressed on His works and word.



## CHAPTER X.

### ADVANTAGES OF THE VIEW.

I DEVOTE the closing pages of the essay to a summary presentation of some of the advantages of the general view here taken.

1. *It accounts for sin in the finite and by apostasy, where alone and as alone it can be, and in accordance with the facts of the case, in history and consciousness.* It presents the unity of truth,—its coalescence and harmony as seen in the concrete and the abstract in this thing,—the agreement of metaphysics and fact. It describes sin, both as a method and a fact, as originating in finite cause,—in its disobedience to the way and will of God. The purpose and economy of sin are comprehended in finite agency, possessing inherently, and of necessity, the attributes of real cause, originating its own plans, and prosecuting its own sin and wrong against the will and Word of God. The view thus gives a legiti-

mate and appreciable accountability for sin. It relieves the subject of the embarrassment contained in the idea that the sinner is prosecuting a Divine method, and acting in some occult sense according to the will of God. It admits the philosophic truth, that every agent has his own method, which is solely his, and that different agents stand related to each other not in the way of identity of method and purpose, but by meeting and intercommingling,—by impinging on each other, and by correlation and conflict, in all the methods of the distinct personal agency of separate intelligences. God does not choose our choices for us, or will our willing, but influences to that which is right, and forbids and discourages that which is wrong, and acts in view of both in an economy of his own as infinite wisdom and goodness direct in the ever-present discretion of His own sovereign and current providence, and to His own great ends. Moral government becomes then no misnomer. There is an appreciable responsibility,—a real duty and destiny in all intelligence. The transparent and obvious obligations of law are checkmated and overborne by no counter impression, that, after all, God in the last analysis is the pro-

ponent of wrong;—and thus, in a way both reliable and satisfactory, we avoid all occult theories of the Divine origin of sin. Hence:

2. *The view here taken justifies the relations of God to sin, and an economy of wrong.* This must be done or moral science is incomplete. The ultimate rule of right must be comprehensive of the Deity. “Its universality appears in this,” says Dr. Hickok, “that the character of all, even of the Supreme Being, may be determined. Were right determined by the will of God, then that will itself would be undetermined in its moral character. But God Himself permits and makes the appeal to the ultimate principle determinative of His own action. ‘Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?’ ‘Are not my ways equal?’ God perfectly knows His own excellency as absolute Spirit, and that which it behooves Him to do, and has thus the same rule of right that is everywhere applicable.”\* Such a justification is of unmeasurable value. It is fundamental in the inquiry concerning right. Without it an appreciable moral government is impossible. Failure here is the great weakness and vice of the old view,

\* Moral Science, p. 56.

on our whole subject. Its advocates at this point have at length surrendered at discretion, and resolved the whole matter of the Divine relations to wrong into an inappreciable enigma. In this they are to be charged with no want of logical acumen ; it is the utmost which that system of thought can do. But the view here taken philosophically accounts for sin without tracing it to God in any sense. It gives the relations of the Infinite to an economy of wrong, as the perfections of the Infinite indubitably aver that they must be, and coincides with all the concrete relations and determinations of the subject. It is adjunct with reason in affirming that the Infinite rejects and repudiates wrong as a method of the universe,—that such a method could not supply the ground of a Divine activity in the direction of it, but would claim that God should deny Himself, and is thus inherently impossible. Our view is thus concurrent with the moral sense, and all the objective relations of truth as outgoing in the works and Word of God, and everywhere expressive of His relations and will in respect to moral evil. These are unique in their cast, and on the side of virtue. They need no *double-entendre*. They may be ex-

pressed in theory as they are in practice, without offense to the moral convictions or to common sense. They are all summed up in those of preventiveness, remedy, and punishment. God brings good out of evil, as He does order out of confusion, not by originating sin as a method, but by bringing His own right method to bear against it in the relations here suggested. Our view fully inaugurates these relations as the sum of God's relations to wrong, and thus justifies them to all reason and truth. It does not seek a good reason for the existence of wrong, for there is none. It does not compromit the character of God by placing sin in His economy of the universe, for it does not find it there, and sees it philosophically and fully accounted for in the finite and by apostasy, where all morality locates it. It does not hold God responsible for the existence of sin, or its consequences on the individual or the race, but only for the exercise of Infinite wisdom in His relations to it as above stated, and in rescuing the universe from its grasp, through probation and retribution. It admits that intelligence is inherently free cause "*per se*," and that the outbreak of the spirit of wrong in one or two worlds is not

necessarily sufficient reason for blotting out all intelligence in the finite, and thus undoing God's own perfect work;—that there may be a more excellent way, as in the parable; and that God knows what is the best way, and will take it, for the instruction and benefit of the universe, with a sovereignty and freedom that he could not have, if the supposition were admissible that sin and wrong were His own method and way of things. The unity of God, as here maintained, is as appreciable in His relations to sin as elsewhere. “He is of one mind, and none can turn Him.” He is the everlasting enemy of all unrighteousness, and our conceptions of His character, and our adoration and love of Him as a being infinitely holy, and righteous, and true, need not be embarrassed by the dogmatic position that He sustains contradictory and irreconcilable relations to sin. His published law concerning it is descriptive of His whole will concerning it; His prohibition of it is of the nature of His whole mind about it; His declaration of it, “as that abominable thing which His soul hates,” the full record of His whole nature and perfections toward it, and directly expressive of all His relations to it.

3. *Our view gives a philosophy on the whole subject of the Divine relations to wrong, which is in accordance with conscience and the common sense of men.* Morality is inherent in the fitness of things. It is of God, and of us as made "in His image." The doctrine of "honor and right" appertains to the Infinite as well as the finite. It is of the mind and spiritual personality of God, as of the mind, and spiritual personality of those made in His likeness. It is a first-truth of reason, and is recognized and appreciable by all intelligence. It has one standard, one measure, one law, one ultimate rule, and is unique and homogeneous; and God commends us to its behests, and holds up for our inspection and attestation, His own character and conduct in correlation with it. Passages of His word doing this have already been referred to, and the references of the subject here in place have been unavoidably wrought into the previous discussions, in the necessary concillience of all truth into the categories of its more specific treatment. Enigmas belong not to the domain of morals. The dictates of the moral sense are a first-truth that must not be ignored in the statements of Theology. No creed can be valid or can live

which repudiates the common sense of men. Such an one may linger in the cloister, but it will not abide the free thought and unschooled verities of the human mind in the ordinary walks of life. It will be thrown by, as obsolete, or held as an untractable dictum of philosophy, which no one is obliged to appreciate or to regard as an index of duty. In accounting for sin in the finite, and comprehending the relations of the Infinite to it as all in the direction of His published law, and of the known dictates of all morality; we gain an important point in the end of conviction, as well as an integral element in the end of truth. We disarm the objections of the moral sense, and sustain the coalescence of truth in philosophy with truth in fact, and as out-spoken and irresistible, in the practical convictions of men.

4. *This view fulfils the terms of reason.* Logic rejects the needless multiplication of causes and grounds for the existence of sin. Reason excludes them from the Infinite, and finds them inherent in the being and fact of finite intelligence. It demands that the Infinite be opposed to the inception of wrong, as being intrinsically a denial of Himself. and no feature of the perfect



methods of the absolute, and that God can but be in all respects repudiative of, and antagonistic to it. Reason affirms the unity of the moral nature of God, and of His will, in the direction of all righteousness,—that sin cannot be in accordance with the Divine mind, but against it, and that God in His relations of antagonism to it, and in the sovereignty of His righteousness and grace, will make to bear upon it, in His own perfect way, for its overthrow and the instruction of the universe, out of it, all the appropriate methods of His Infinite wisdom and power, as one whose method it is not, and whose being and perfections it disowns.

5. *Our view meets the terms of the problem before us, and brings in no anomalous idea.* It accounts for sin, justifies righteousness, and secures the end of the Divine government, in consistency with first principles in our subjective being and in all objective truth,—in harmony with the providence of God, extended over six thousand years, and with the instructions and whole moral atmosphere of His word. It withdraws the unappreciable enigmas and irreconcilable contradictions found in a secret Divine will opposed to the published will of God. It surrenders the in-

consistent position that He wills what He forbids,—that He forbids what he purposes,—that He punishes the execution of His own plan and economy of things,—that He proposes intrinsic wrong, as His way of securing good, and that all the sin, and crime, and wretchedness of rebel men and angels, are in some intelligent sense His method of things, and according to His will. As before stated, our view does not give a justifiable reason for the existence of sin, for it finds no such one; nor can such a reason for it exist. It does not attempt the explanation of sin as inherently of God, or his economy, for it is not there. It does not seek its justification as the Divine method of the universe, for it is not that method; and if asked again the principle of its introduction, we refer, as before, to the Saviour's parable of the tares in the field, and to His exposition of it, as containing that principle to the conviction of reason and the moral sense.

6. *Our view gives the law of the historic development of sin, and resolves, in consistency with all truth, the question of "honor, and right," in the Deity concerning it.* Sin is self-originated, and self-perpetuated, and self-responsible *in the agency* whose it is, and in whose

economy and course of things it is comprehended. The householder was not responsible for the tares in his field or the harm they did, and only for the best method of their removal, and of repairing the evils which they worked there. Make the current or hereditary evils of sin what you will, God does not hold himself responsible for them. "An enemy hath done it." "Are not my ways equal, saith the Lord." He sustains no unrighteous relation to sin, be its mischiefs and resultant propensities in the individual or on the race, whatsoever they may be. His province is not that of a proponent and guide of wrong. To its own master it stands or falls. It must not be put by us under the protection and fostering care of the Deity, as doing His bidding, and under law to Him. The Infinite rejects it, and has nothing in it. That there is a natural course of things is not denied. It is a course of things as it should be, and, for aught I know, as only it could be. Falling into it, in a moral sphere, and sharing its influence *there*, is only in accordance with what obtains everywhere else. It is analogous to what we can but see is on us in other respects, and must be on us from the very terms of finite and conditioned

being. Who ever elected when he should be born—or where—or in what circumstances—of what parents—or what people, civilized or rude, high or low, rich or poor—to what nation belong—and under what advantages begin his personal career? or from the nature of the case could so elect?

But by how much is the sphere of our being influenced by that which is unavoidably anterior to us, and necessarily beyond our reach. These predisposing circumstances are not our sin, or of our personal responsibility. They are in relation to our personal activity of the nature of temptation and motive influences, and it is of the imperatives of the personal will that we resist temptation and all the incentives to wrong action which cluster in the foreground of our elective action, from whatsoever quarter they come. We need not follow the lead of propensity, but should take that of conscience, reason, and truth. God holds us responsible for right moral action, however situated. For that were we made, to that are we competent as the legitimate action of all intelligences, whatever unfavorable influences may have been thrown in our way by an economy of sin, or any works of the devil. God

has been very gracious in all His relations to us, thus situated. We have shared His concern and compassions. Hence, His prohibition of wrong,—His probationary economy in the end of piety for our recovery from sin,—His revelation and atoning sacrifice,—His manifestation in the flesh, in the person, and life, and teachings of His Son, and the superadded economy of the Holy Spirit as an agency coördinate with the truth, and all right intelligent action, to aid us against all wrong influences, and gain us to the rectitude of our spiritual being.

Viewed in this connection, the 5th chapter of Romans is not so difficult of explication as learned commentary on it would often lead us to conclude. The great Apostle, in that gifted portion of his letter, is reasoning from what is, through sin, to what God has constituted through grace, and to the supereminence of the latter in its consequences as *His* work, over the former as resultant of an economy of wrong through the ingress of sin. The Apostle's reference to sin and its effects, is for the illustration and to set forth the relations and value of the work of redemption. And he goes to this foreground of his argument as to a history of facts.

He takes the matter as he finds it in its natural order of sequence, and in its historic relations, and thence runs the parallels and contrasts of grace, and shows the over-abounding condescension and love of God therein. He states what is in respect to sin, and as it *is*, and because it *is*, on its own appropriate basis. He proceeds from what sin is and has done, to what God in grace has done and will do. He is arguing for no arbitrary Divine economy of a special character in respect to sin, or of headship, by contract or stipulation between him and Adam in the matter. Nothing transpired to show that Adam knew, or supposed that he stood in some special sense for his posterity, or, indeed, in any relations to a posterity. There seem to be no traces of a "*solemn league and covenant*" between the parties, or of which they were cognizant, which shall make the strict notion of the *federal* headship of Adam in the matter, anything other than a modern theological idea. The case was no way different from what was inherently meet and natural in the premises, or from what must have been, on any correct view of Divine moral government. It only followed the principles of truth and right, necessarily involved in all such government. Adam

*was* the head and outgoing of the race, and he *did* sin, and that was the sundering of a legal economy, and the giving up of eternal life thereby. That economy could go no further. God could do no more, except in the way of penalty or grace. As a righteous governor and administrator of simple law, He must depart from Adam as the conservator of his good, and leave him to his sin and its consequences on him and his.

This would be the course of things in the premises, as it has been in fact. It would be the natural order of moral being and government thus situated. It is not a special, Divine constitution, but a universal law of being not to be excepted against because of sin. It is in itself a perfect economy though sin has occurred, and its tendencies in the way of habit and propensity are witnessed. It is the natural order of created beings, and God's own perfect way concerning all being, and He will not alter it to accommodate sin. He will not give up the generic economy of the universe because sin invades it. If it come, let it take the consequences in an established order of being, and get on as best it may in its method of misrule and rebellion in the universe. God will not relieve it of its responsibilities,

neither need we in our references of the subject. If sin make havoc in the race, charge it to the right issue, and not on a universal law of being in itself beneficent and helpful. Set it not down in disparagement of that perfect way which gives to the future the benefit of rectitude in the past, and constitutes development the law of progress and culture. The burdens of sin, then, are self-imposed on the race. Its inheritance of woes follows a generic law of being, in itself good and right. The finite may not have comprehended it, as it does not the full effect of any misdeed. Still, "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water." "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." It is a "wisdom which is not of God, but is earthly, sensual, and devilish;" and though it works badly in an economy of things which is inherently right and good, God will not hold Himself responsible for this. He will rather let it work out its own problems, set up its own beacon-lights of woe, and thus be its own schoolmaster, criticise its own method, and write its own condemnation. He will Himself draw instruction for the race and the universe from these ensigns of woe and wrath it sets up, and as planted along the track



of providence, and as incidental and subsidiary to the penalties of law, and thus, through a recuperative agency, bring good out evil. "This may come as some curse upon the ground, or upon man himself in his sentient being, which shall last through all the generations of the spared race, and under which the creation shall groan and travail in pain, from the beginning of sin onward. The displeasure of God and His abhorrence of the old iniquity, may terribly admonish the subjects of grace through their whole life of suffering, and bereavement, and sickness, and final death of the body; yet it will not be in the penal infliction of judgment without mercy, but a severe discipline in mercy, so that all may remember the great fact that God terribly abhors sin even while He makes provision to pardon it, and waits for His spared subjects to turn from it. He chastises as a father, He admonishes as a teacher, but He does not yet punish as a sovereign judge and executioner. He waits to be gracious, though His waiting is amid all the severe but salutary discipline which is designed to bring back to piety."\*

The 5th chapter to the Romans, thus viewed,

\* Hickok, *Moral Science*, p. 353.

is congenial with all truth and the promptings of the moral sense, and assertory of the doctrine of "honor and right in the Deity." It is itself a magnificent monument reared by a master's hand, to the rightness and grace of God, "written all over in letters of living light," from the cap-stone to the foundation. It is God in the gospel triumphant over "sin and death," and justifying the conclusion to which the apostle comes: "But where sin abounded grace did much more abound, that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life."

Dr. Beecher has vastly weakened his other positions in his book, if not his general reputation for biblical exegesis, by his circuitous and involved methods with this passage. It is simple as childhood, but for the preconceived theories infused into it. It is integral in the apostle's argument, and in the range of his general discussion. It is God's economy of grace, as related to and contrasted with the economy of sin and "all the works of the devil," and lies legitimately in the fore-ground of those rich conclusions to which its author comes in the seventh and eighth chapters of the epistle, where, in

language of light, and as instructed in his own deep experience, he traces the "law of sin in the members," and "the law of God in the mind," and in view of the weakness of a merely legal economy for sanctification, against the rampant enormities and prevalence of sin, appeals so affectingly and rejoicingly to the resources and energies of the Gospel: "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

The relation of the souls of men to our first progenitor, may be analogous to that of their bodies to Him. Though sin and ill-desert are personal, and all intelligence personal cause, yet effects growing out of the habits of one generation may appear in the next. Excesses in a parent may occasion dwarfishness or idiocy in a child. The divergent idiosyncrasies of tribes and races of men may be thus influenced. The child of the inebriate may have a physical constitution more exposed to the vice of drunkenness than if otherwise born. Sin may perpetuate

thus its effects, but not *itself*. Illegitimacy of birth may be a calamity, but the sin in the premises lay in the generation back. It may affect one's social position, but it is not his sin. Thus, among the living the crime of one may be the grief and humiliation of another; and may throw into the foreground of his moral action an atmosphere of motive influences which otherwise he would not have. All this is not of his responsibility, or his sin. It does not take away the constituent elements of his being, as a moral agent, or his inherent capacity or obligation for right action. It is related to his responsibility as all suggestions of the devil are, and all the pleadings of habit and propensity, however derived; and it is the province of his personal being, and the behest of the spiritual imperatives of his soul, that he resist temptation and all pleadings and incentives to wrong action, whether *in* his being or *out*,—whether from the past or the present,—whether from the pit or from this world, and to act conscientiously, and reasonably, and right, whatever may be the strength or the direction of the motives before him to do wrong. The incentives to wrong choice doubtless lie very much in the present.

They are from the instigations of the devil, as at first. He is styled "the God of this world." They lie in the ten thousand sources of wrong influence which are around us from infancy, and in the past of our own personal history. But I see no need of disputing the position, that motive influences and incentives to wrong action may come down, too, from the past of the race, and that the universal sinfulness among men, and the uniform need of a regeneration, and a new life in Christ Jesus, have a legitimate interpretation in the more generic idea of the inherent influence and tendencies of an economy of wrong. I see no objections to an order of existence in the moral sphere which gives to the future of a race a vantage ground for righteousness in the righteousness of the past. This normal operation of the law would be beneficent, and not to be complained of, though it works badly in an economy of sin and wrong. But this is only a generic fact. Sin works evil in our physical being and everywhere,—in every wholesome law, and even in the perfect economy of God. Of the mischievous workings of sin in this respect, God is aware, as well as we, though He should not, for this reason, alter the

general economy of nature and being, and undo His own work.

The laws of being are beyond the control of sin. If it break into the universe, it breaks into it with an ongoing economy of being as it is; and though the intrusion works disastrously in an economy inherently good, that economy cannot be changed for its sake. The normal working of the law is good. It was not designed for the ingress of sin, and may not be disturbed by reason of it. To this perverted offshoot God is bringing the appliances of His wisdom and compassion; and these are all the relations of the Infinite to that abnormal and lamented effect of the law through sin, which is otherwise and in the authorized movements of finite cause, beneficent and well-conditioned. We will not, then, charge the burdens of sin on a Divine economy in itself good; and while we praise God for the love He bears us, in sin, and for the remedies He brings us, in the capabilities of His grace, we will set over under its proper auspices sin itself, and the mischiefs which are resultant of it, in the operation of a universal law of being, inherently benevolent and protective.

7. *Our view renders the doctrine of responsibility intelligible.* Responsibility is a dictate of our moral nature, and should be practically intelligible to us, and appreciable by us in its relations to all affiliated truth. But in the idea of responsibility infallibly inheres that of cause, with a discretion and power over that which is the subject matter of the responsibility, to do or not to do it. This is the language of all law, and warning, and counsel, and instruction. Why give them to one who has no inherent election over the thing commanded, or advised, to cause that it should be, or not be? A mere effect is not responsible. It is but a necessitated result, and lies necessarily in the category of all physics. There must be the element of a personal causality, with a jurisdiction over the being of the action, or result charged, in order for responsibility to be accounted. It inheres in a cause, and is applicable only to that which is cause. And if God is the only true cause in the universe, He is the only responsible being in it. If all else is in the last analysis but an effect, and moves only as moved by Him, and finds the grounds of its movement in the power and will of God,—if intelligence of being in the finite is

not cause "*per se*," then do we find no intelligible responsibility therein. All is mere machinery moved by another hand. We may *feel* responsibility, as we must from the imperatives of our being, but this is only a half truth. It is a mislead, a confusion, if it cannot find its correlates in all objective truth and relations. It demands that correlation, and is God's warrant for it. And without this correlation and correspondence of the inward and the outward sphere—of the causal and the caused, we can make no intelligent statement of this whole matter as related to the objects for which we are responsible, and the duties submitted to our election. On that principle all must be in the ongoing of the moral sphere but the transcript of God's will, and moved by His power, and to His own ends. So far as intelligence in the finite is concerned, all is only a leaden fate.

But morality resides in a cause. A mere effect is without accountability. It has no discretion, no electiveness, no suitedness to command, no element for duty. It may be a top, or a water-wheel, or a railroad car, and move responsively in the grooves cut for it, and according to the might of the hand impressed on it. But there



is no self-originating, personal imperative there, with power to give or withhold compliance ; no personal self, no innate will, to which the question must go, and where the discretion lies as to an obedience to its behests. And there is no accountability there. And if this be the fashion and the doctrine of causality in the moral sphere, then does it coalesce in the physical,—all distinction between the two, so far as our present subject is concerned, is annihilated, and all responsibility in the finite vanishes alike from both. The theory here referred to may take advantage of the subjective being of man, and contend that, after all, he *feels* free and responsible. But, as already suggested, it makes this a disjointed truth. It is like a truncated cone mourning for its counterpart. It is a truth in its orphanage and without its parallelisms, and coincidences, and reciprocations in all correlated truth, and in its solitude unintelligible, deceptive, and objectless. Why hold me responsible and deny me the attributes of personal cause, and with no power of electing my course, and working out a legitimate destiny ? Why make me, in my moral sphere, but an effect, and then charge me with the responsibilities of true cause ? This our view

does not do. It allows to that "made in the image of God," the attributes of legitimate cause that works out its destiny intelligibly on principles inhering in it. It is not necessitated by an outside pressure, and does not lose its individuality on an ultimate analysis, in an all-absorbing pantheism. It can ever, and under all circumstances, respond to every legitimate claim, and justify the behests of all known duty. Our view, then, on this subject gives the metaphysics of truth in accordance with its objective and concrete relations, and finds the intelligible counterpart of both in the conscious convictions and innate verities of the soul.

8. *Our view renders the preaching of repentance intelligently consistent.* Will is cause as properly in the finite as in the Infinite. Men have in themselves the attributes of complete personality, and have discretion and electiveness, and jurisdiction in respect to their own voluntary states and acts. They are themselves cause, and have inherently and of themselves the power to do right and to do wrong. Impenitency is not necessitated, or prescribed, or needful to the economy of God, or His great end in all things. There is no decretive will of

God in the element of wrong in man. What is in the moral sphere is not there through necessity, or of necessity according to the will of God. His will and way for us is without limitation or embarrassment in the direction of all righteousness, and in the end of all piety. In preaching repentance, I am not checkmated by the persuasion that God is the proponent of all wrong, that sin exists by His permission and decree, and is His method in a moral universe. I place it under other auspices,—in the finite and by apostasy, and against the will of God, and give all the relations of the Infinite to it in that of an utter antagonism, such as accords with my moral convictions and the known perfections of God.

I gain here, too, the coalescence of truth in philosophy and truth in fact, and while I recognize in every man the competency for right action, I see the will of God also to be uncompromisingly in that direction. The preaching of repentance is no arbitrary enactment, or merely positive institution. It has inherent validity and vitality. One may go to the work freed from the paralysis that sin is the institution of God, and its prevalence according to His decree, and

may gather strength for his mission in the conviction that God's methods in respect to sin, and His mind toward it, and His supremacy over it, are not in the way of patronage and guidance, but of rebutting and rebuke,—that His relations to it are coincident with the work of the preacher, and a help to him, and lie in harmony with the design of the gospel and of its dispensation. The highest good is the highest virtue, and *there* is found the will of God; and I bring up in my mind no discordant element of belief in going forth as commissioned to preach to men everywhere that “the will of God is their sanctification.” I am confounded by no contradictory relations of God to the subject,—no theory that sin is in any sense according to His will, or is His method for good, or that what is, is of necessity for the best, or as it should be, or as only it could be; or find in the actual simply, the exponent of the possible. I am not obliged to regard virtue as only an *expedient* in the *finite*, and there for an end *ulterior* to itself. I am forced to run no parallels of contrast between the plans and perfections of God, or find an apology for impenitence in its being a necessitated state of being by the laws of mind, as well as by the purposes of

God. The "is," is not, of course, "the ought to be," or necessarily the will of God. The Gospel in its effort is in harmony with all Divine perfections. The whole heart of God is in it, as in all righteousness; and in gaining men to its acceptance and the renunciation of their sins I am gaining them from intrinsic wrong and evil; from that which dishonors God and themselves, to the intrinsic rectitude of their being,—to the approbation of God, and to the highest good. The idea that sin is the method of God, and is thus introduced into His system, and as part of an integer there, and a helpmeet to the whole, disconcerts me in preaching *redemption from it*. I see, in one sin, the principle of all sin, even to the blackest enormities of earth and hell; and I know that what is in a *plan*, is there for the sake of its *execution*,—that the vitality of a method is in its realization. With such an endorsement for sin, and regarding it as the scheme bids me, as a necessitated result in the sinner of causes lying out of himself, and really in God; what heart can I have against it, or to preach the baptism of repentance? The sinner is really doing the will of God now, and filling up his destiny, though inexorable as fate. And

this thought takes all inherent vitality out of my commission, and all intrinsic urgency out of my method and work. It becomes like the turning of a door on its hinges. It is but the creaking tread-mill, and the ongoing in the moral sphere is but the submissive interpreter of the mind of God.

But give to intelligence the attributes of real cause, and regard sin as intrinsic wrong,—as opposed to the method and will of God, and essentially the antagonist of the highest good, as seen in the rectitude of spiritual being, and view the relations of God to sin as wholly in harmony with the design and spirit of the gospel, and its effort to save men from the dominion and peril of that economy of wrong which is in no sense of him; and you change the scene every way.

The whole heart of God is now with you in the presentation you make, and the whole field open for the action of those considerations and inducements intrinsically adapted to influence mind, and to “convince” and “persuade” men to turn unto God. You can now preach repentance to the sinner, and hold him intelligibly to the issue you make. This is his spiritual rectitude, and to this is he constitutently competent. This is the will of God concerning him,—this

is the highest good and ultimate end in moral government. You can announce the messages of the gospel, and preach repentance to sinners, and justify your position and your claim, by every principle of common justice, and common sense, and common life, by the moral convictions of their own souls,—the behests of all righteousness and the relations of all truth, without finding a morbid belief in the background of your theology, and your statements, that robs them of all their directness, their naturalness, and their life. Truth is simplified, consentaneous, and consistent with itself, and in harmony with the laws of all intelligence. The gospel becomes the wisdom and the power of God to the being He has given us; and should this whole matter be thus viewed by those who dispense that Gospel, and would they regard its methods as describing the methods of God with sin, and as comprehensive of His relation to it; might we not anticipate a resurrection power in the pulpits of Christendom, which, as associated with the graciously superadded economy of the Spirit, and in harmony with His influences, would bear benignly on the cause of God, and the “best good” of an apostate race.

9. *Our view quickens activity in the service of Christ.* It is in truth demanded by the behests of morality, and lies in the very elements of an aggressive engagedness in doing good. There is a stratum of antinomianism underlying the old view on this subject, and as the necessary basis of it. The ultimate analysis of it will show this cropping out everywhere, and show too, that our Christian efforts are in conflict with our theoretic beliefs, and must triumph over them if actually put forth, and that the farthest extreme to which the doctrines of an antinomian theology, have been carried, even to the quiescence and abnegation of all Christian effort, is the only point of practical consistency with the teachings of the scheme. What is better than the will of God? and what scheme of things better than that which is according to the will of God? And if what is, is according to His will, and is described as being thus from the fact that it is, and if God as the only cause sees things to be in the present, in the last analysis of the matter, as he would have them, sin and wrong not excepted; what more needs to be done about it? You have God's perfect way in the present, as it is; why change it?—or how



see in it the necessities for something else, or derive from it the motive of something better? God, on this hypothesis, sees all things, on the whole, as He would have them, and why should not we? If they meet the mind of God, why not meet our minds? Why seek something better than that which, all things considered, is best? Why break in upon God's economy and supersede His will, and be anxious about that which, after all, meets His mind, and is the fulfilment of His own way and pleasure? God can have His own way, and does, says the scheme. There is just as much piety on the earth as He sees best there should be, and when He would have more, He will see to it that there is; and why need I distress myself about it, or be wiser or better than God, or thrust myself out into an obtrusive pietism and self-imposed care of things, as if God did not know what was best? Why trouble myself with a gratuitous concern about that which, as it is, is according to the will of God, and the best thing possible in its place?

The sentiment goes to the merging of the "*ought*" in the "*is*,"—to the abnegation of virtue from the imperatives of the soul, and the utter quietism of the antinomian spirit, and the

stolid indifference of a Mohammedan fate. And though we rejoice that Christendom is not there yet, and that the convictions of the moral sense, and the co-ordinate energies of the Word and Spirit of God, beat up successfully against the downward tendencies of imperfect theory; yet does that theory operate disastrously and widely along the line of Christian effort for the evangelizing of the world, and exert its deadening influence on all sentiment and thought in that behalf. It lies necessarily as an *incubus* in the foreground of any purpose or any effort to change the existing state and relations of the moral world. A leaden insensibility and quietude are the legitimate fruit of the theory in question, and no man can abide by it and follow its teachings. His subjective being will revolt, and the Divinely-implanted imperatives of his spirit will strive to change that which is, and is intrinsically wrong, to that which is right, and ought to be. But why put theory in the way of this, and reverse the sentiments of all righteousness and of our constituent being, and clog the aspirations of the soul in its commerce with truth and duty, by inaugurating sin as God's way of things, and giving the facts of its current

history as the index of His mind and will? Assume, in any instance, that what is, in a moral sphere, contains in the fact of its being, the evidence that it coincides with the will of God in any appreciable sense, and must of necessity be as He would have it, and there is no halting short of all the vagaries and repulsions of the most downright antinomianism, even to the denial of whatever is appropriate to moral government. But concede that this is not so, and that the *actual* contains not, of necessity, such evidence, and you take inevitably the position of this Essay. There is no middle ground, no possible alternative. It is fate or free will. All truth admits of no other category in the premises. Deny the first, and the positions as above which arise necessarily from it, and you declare that God is not the only cause, and that all will is cause *per se*; and that there may be and are causations, and plans, and schemes, and methods, and purposes, and results, (of different personalities,) which He did not originate, and will not endorse; and kingdoms, and principalities, and thrones, and powers, that He must put down; and that His supremacy is to be viewed as not in the line of coincidence with all that is, and as

identical with the ongoing economy of all that is, but through a method of His own inherent in all righteousness, and in all right authority, and which is in consistency with His law, and the behests of all virtue in created intelligences,—through an economy which demands of them the practice of all virtue, and the use of all the imperatives of right action in the soul, as adjunct with Him in correcting and overcoming all that is wrong everywhere, and against it, and in the promotion of all that is right everywhere, and in accordance with His will. Here is our stand, and our basis of Christian effort. And why shrink from it, and resolve the supremacy of God into the one element of a bald, and grim, physical Almightyness, and annihilate by that one element the discrepancy between the “*is*” and the “*can be*”?

Some things are possible in the finite that are not in the Infinite. God “cannot lie,” but man can. God cannot change, but we can and do. God cannot do wrong, and that not because He is above law and moral relations, but because of His infinity in them; but that we can is a matter of bitter experience. Intelligent action is inherently in view of the motives and considera-

tions in which it takes its rise, and which thus lie in the foreground of it. And the glory of the Infinite it is, that there are, or can be to Him no such grounds of a mental activity to that which is wrong. It does and can supply to God but the grounds of the repudiation of His mind, the revulsions of His heart, and the condemnation of His whole being and will. The doctrine of cause in Him, is that of perfect freedom in a perfect righteousness. Who doubts this, and yet this is the key-note of our treatise. It is the fortress of our strength, about which our whole theory crystallizes with what imperfection soever it may have been stated. And it teaches us to ascribe no wrong method or agency to God,—to regard Him as existing and acting ever in the way of a perfect and appreciable rectitude, and in accordance with His manifestations to us in our spiritual being and in His works and word. We submit to what is, as event, though resultant of wrong agency, in view of what we hope for from the recuperative providence and methods of God, while we see in all righteousness the index of His will, both in the present and the future, and go to the effort of the world's conversion to Christ and to

every good word and work, with the unembarrassed conviction that the mind of God is there, that He discriminates between the *is* and the *ought to be*, sees not all that is as He would have it, and is Himself, with the angels of light, on the errand of remedy and redress,—that His people linger behind Him, alas far—too far behind Him in their imperfect and inadequate methods and efforts,—that the command to disciple the nations was as truly the index of His will when made, as now it is or ever can be, and that had it been carried into effect, through the corresponding agency of His people long since, and the triumph of jubilee been sounded over the world ages ago, the will of God would have been better accomplished than now it is or ever will be. A desideratum, or unfulfilled desire, is not an impossibility in the Infinite; “who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” But, I repeat, will this ever be? God is happy in His righteousness, as all intelligence is, and in the imperatives of His own interior sphere, in the direction of all rectitude and goodness. He is supreme, in that all but sin and wrong are now submissive to Him, and in that He will eventual-

ly put down all "principalities and powers," and all that exalts itself against Him, but not in the necessary coalescence of that which is with that which should be. And hence the pressure that is on us "as workers together with God," to do all that probation can, before an inevitably resultant dispensation comes, and retribution, with its coercive methods, takes to its righteous award of condemnation and woe, that which probation has not gained.

10. *Our view endows with reality the ordinance of prayer.* Prayer is appropriate within the sphere of sin and want. Where no sin is, there is no want. Physical ill and necessity is the child of moral ill. Where there is nothing to be deprecated, and nothing to fear, the province of strict prayer is superseded and out of place. Angels may adore, and praise, and intercede for the fallen, and sinful, and necessitous; but for themselves have no occasion to pray. Their estate is complete in righteousness and fruition, and if prayer has any relevancy in respect of them, it must be in view of a supposed liability to sin, and thus does not change the vitality of the position here taken. Sin is thus the parent of want and woe in the moral

sphere. That sphere is perfect and faultless where sin has not marred it. The desire of knowledge is instinctive, and finite intelligence rejoices in an ever-fresh expansion and growth, but this normal condition of being is easily distinguishable from deprecatory prayer against positive want and wretchedness. That implies discontent with what is in the given premises, and asks something different and better in its place. Be it in the state of the heart, or of the world,—in respect to our condition, circumstances, or relations,—it arises out of dissatisfaction with the present, or from fear of the future, and implores change and a shield. It is a necessity which sin has occasioned, and springs from the abnormal state of the moral sphere. But if this state is a Divine expedient and method,—if it is in any conceivable sense Divinely instituted, and on the whole the perfect way of God, it is difficult to assign the relevancy or relations of prayer. If that which is, and in the relations in which it is, is necessarily the exponent of the will of God at that point, why ask to have it changed? The belief that it is thus conditioned, inaugurates antinomianism, and precludes prayer. And the conflict between this and the



aspirations of our intelligence and moral nature, has generated the multifarious theories which have obtained on the subject, and occasioned all the difficulty which, by common consent, lies in it. Some have denied the appositeness of prayer altogether. Others have confined its object to its influence on the mind of the petitioner himself, tantalizing and suicidal to all prayer as this obviously is. While others still, with greater orthodoxy, have viewed prayer as among the Divinely-arranged sequences in the chain of events, and to be used because prescribed as a positive institution of God, rather than as having any inherent vitality and appropriateness. Hence, we often hear such expressions as the following in prayer: "Grant this if thou hast not otherwise determined,"—"if consistent with thy purposes;" solecistic and nugatory as such prayer must of necessity be when traced to an ultimate analysis. Who would pray against the purposes of God? What room for real prayer, in a sphere where God is the only cause, and that which is, is the necessary exponent of His will, and of what use can it be? Prayer in such a sphere, is at once rebellion and an absurdity. It has no breadth of being,—no margin of vitality,—no at-

mosphere,—no room to breathe, or be. If the “is,” is of necessity the expression of the will of God, the doctrine of a want is inadmissible. But why thus make prayer an impossibility, and crush its life out between the physical necessities of our theory? Why not allow to prayer as wide a margin of naturalness, and as free an expansion, and as direct an issue, and as equal a vitality, when made to God, as when made to any other being?

The characteristics of Infinite intelligence are recognized from its image in the finite. God has all those perfections which should inspire confidence and encourage appeal. He exists eternally in the present. His purposes relating to Himself are a present discretion in view of what is, and what should be. “His ear is open” without limit, and without forestallment. His way is perfect in all righteousness, and goodness, and truth. Sin, and wrong, and want, and unhappiness, are not inherently His way, or the normal method of the universe. His supremacy is through antagonism to these, and every “work of the devil.” The Infinite resources of His mind and being stand correlated with the object of all true prayer against

sin and harm, and all the methods of wrong and wretchedness in the finite, or that are resultant of apostasy there. It is of Him and like Him to hear prayer, and through His Infinite wisdom and discretion to make it prevalent against every foe. We may go to Him with as free and unembarrassed a mind, as legitimate and direct a purpose, and as full expectations in submission to what is right and best, as in approaching any one else. Prayer to Him lies in the same relations as to any other discretionary agent, and is in those relations equally as apposite and natural for the full issue contemplated in the subject-matter of the "petitions which we desire of Him." A revealed purpose of His we would not pray against, an unrevealed one we would not alter. We come to Him as to one who is perfect in all righteousness, and the antagonist of all wrong,—one in whose boundless resources of wisdom, and might, and goodness, we can confide for protection and deliverance from every device and work of the adversary, and from the spirit of wrong within or around us, and who will give us the victory through faith, according to His word.

11. *Our view inspires hope of the conversion of*

*the world to Christ, and of the eventual triumph of truth and godliness.* Sin is not a method of the Infinite. It has no foothold in the counsels of God. Its perpetuation is not of the strategy of the Eternal. Its sphere is not that of the endless cycles of God. *He* has not inaugurated it as His way of a universe, and only repudiates and repels it. The Infinite and the right are its antagonists. Its sphere is in the finite and the wrong. Its conception and economy are there. It has a reasonable being nowhere. God, reason and conscience, and all righteousness, are against it. It is justified at no bar, and in no element of legitimate causation. It is born of error, and a lie in finite cause. Its very principle is abnormal and supposititious. It has not the approving verdict of any one constituent element of intelligence in the finite or Infinite. Its basis is an assumption. Reason must predict its overthrow. A normal state of things has an element of permanency and eventual success. Truth is eternal and Godlike, and has in it, and with it, all the giant principles of intelligence and righteousness to bear upon and determine the issue in a Divine moral government.

Lord Brougham argues the eventual universal

spread of Christianity over the earth, from the fact that it is *true*, and comprehensive of all morality. There is strength in the position. That which is like God, and like His image in the finite, and has the consent of reason and all righteousness, may be expected to prevail. Limit sin to a method of wrong in the finite, and give its sphere in that in which is nothing of God or right, and there is hope for Christ and humanity. But account it an expedient of the Infinite, and in its plan and proposition stretching off into the endless cycles of the Eternal, and who can calculate its orbit, or foretell its uses or dominant prevalence and duration? If sin is a Divine method, we are in possession of no principles on which to predict its discomfiture and overthrow, and even the sayings of God on this head are neutralized by His ubiquitous relations to wrong. Under this assumption we get no foothold in His perfections in aid of the eventual triumph of righteousness. That which is a good now, as a feature of His economy, may always be. We become unable to comprehend the sphere of sin, or to separate it from the plans and methods of God, or give a real Divine antagonism to it. All is too dramatized and like a

pageant. It suggests the idea that the method is for the sake of the end, and not for its own inherence in all righteousness. It makes the universe an expedient and not a moral economy, and prosecuted for the sake of an issuing and declarative Divine glory; rather than a system instinct and inherent everywhere and always, in all morality, and prosecuted ever in the end of a perfect spiritual excellency, and on the principle and in the interest of all virtue, and truth, and honor, and right. It leaves the perfections of God without determination as to a result, and the declarations of God unguaranteed by the principles of all reason and truth, as to what the end shall be. It constitutes the universe a means merely, worked for the sake of an end wholly out of itself, instead of one inhering in all righteousness, both in the finite and Infinite, and thus resolves all morality into mere expediency, and annihilates the distinction between a virtue and a prudence. This effectually destroys our hope of the future, and undermines its promises.

But give the whole Deity, in His relation to sin, in uncompromising antagonism to it, and in inherent righteousness and accordance with the declarations and promises of His word, and with

the teachings of reason and our moral convictions,—place sin as a method and an outbreak in the finite merely, and there without the endorsement of conscience, or any good reason in its behalf; and the supremacy of God over it, and that of all truth and righteousness under Him, to the inevitable discomfiture of the spirit of wrong, and its humiliation and confinement to its own place, are obviously inferred. Besides all else, there is a principle in this view which argues success.

“Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just.” “The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion.” “The thief doth esteem each bush an officer.” And thus, if sin may not find its way as an integrant in a Divine economy, and is, as a method and an actuality, comprehended in the abnormal state and attitudes of finite cause, and the resources of infinite wisdom and sufficiency are in and with the promises we have concerning Zion, we may hasten to the rescue of a lapsed race with every measure of hope and encouragement.

In extension of the general thought here, and as germane to our whole subject, the following suggestion is in place: Sin is an incident in a

finite sphere, and not a method of the author of that sphere. A moral system is inherently capable of it, and liable to it, and could not be otherwise, for conduct, and character, with a consequent destiny, are elective; but then that sin, if it occur, must not be traced to the methods of the Infinite, or be any way of them. The proposition and genesis of sin is in finite cause, and its philosophy is transparent in our moral convictions respecting it. In God's moral universe it is the exception and not the rule. Some few worlds out of myriads may have revolted, but the sufficiency of God will get back the great majority of intelligences even in these. Here, and over all worlds, God's methods are inherent and transparent in all righteousness, and will be indubitably and gloriously prosecuted in the end of all morality and virtue. Righteousness is God's end and glory, as it is the glory of all intelligence. Grace is in order to piety; and that piety is the restoration of the fallen to God and rectitude again. It is the only righteousness their case admits of, and it is glorious in the Divine methods through which it is. They come to it, and continue in it, under the additional guarantees which their own bitter experience of



sin has supplied, and this experience will doubtless be for instruction everywhere in the finite. "The way of transgressors is hard." Wrong is wont to be an argument for right. The outbreak and history of sin will be such an argument, both to the fallen and the unfallen,—both in the method of punishment and of remedy. Sin being the liability of a moral system, and coming from the nature of such a system, and being the misuse and perversion of an economy perfect and Godlike in itself and in its normal ongoing, and yet not being of that Divine method and economy, will be for warning and conservation through the universe, both from the nature of the case and the sufficiency of God. The doctrine is patent everywhere, in the family and in society as well as in a Divine administration. It is the end of all punishment,—all exposure of wrong,—all reference to the mischievous working of that anomalous method in the finite, which in its conception "bringeth forth sin, and that sin which, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

Principles are eternal like God Himself. Sin must be an incident in a nature of things, and not the purpose and method of its author. It

can but be a misuse and perversion of a perfect economy, and not a part of it. God knows it as it is, and brings the resources of His Divine administration to bear on the exigency it occasions, to sustain and make triumphant the right, the reasonable, and the good, notwithstanding the outbreak and ravages of sin. This is the doctrine of the parable. It furnishes the legitimate kind of hope in the premises. It buttresses them on the nature of God, and a coincident philosophy of truth, and brings the name, and nature, and word of the Eternal into coöperative harmony in behalf of the success of the gospel, and the universal triumph of truth and piety over the earth.

12. *Our view removes objections from the evangelical system of belief.* The dogma that God has planned an economy of wrong, and introduced sin as an ingredient in the normal method of the universe, and as an integrant in His administration of things, does not help a theoretic statement of Divine truth, and is not necessary to its completeness. It badly incorporates itself with any of the doctrines of grace or aspirations of piety. It is repudiated alike by the moral sense and common apprehensions of men,

and claims admittance in theology only by the argument *ad ignorantiam*. It is but a grievance to those who would seek to define and reconcile its relations to the aim and spirit of the gospel. It is ever "like a foot out of joint." We need it not in the Church of Calvin, or Luther, or Augustin, or Paul. The elements of our faith are not enigmatical or equivocating. They are not inappreciable to reason, or difficult for conscience, but lie in the highway of the convictions and recognized verities of the soul. They are in the doctrine of an apostasy from the perfect methods and likeness of the Infinite as the normal state of all intelligence, for how could sin otherwise be,—in the necessary abandonment of man apostate, on the part of God, on the grounds of law simply, and a method of justification in the grace of God, and on terms sustaining law and righteousness, and restoring the sinner in spirit to God, and a state of reconciliation with Him, through a vicarious atonement,—in a Divine discretion in this work of mercy toward the guilty and undeserving, and a gracious sovereignty in its administration, as God sees best and moral government demands, and yet giving the assurance of its wide and efficacious

prevalence over the spirit of apostasy, and that an innumerable company, which no man can number, shall come home to glory through its compassionate ministry, out of every country, and people, and kingdom, and nation, while others, notwithstanding the offer of life, and the privilege of accepting it, "will not come to Christ," and will perish in their sins, under the ultimate and indispensable, retributory dispensations of God. Here, and in affiliated truths, is the evangelical system. To make the Divine relations to an economy of wrong the same decretively, or any way the same as to that of a recovered holiness and a regained rectitude of being, does but mar a system of belief. Any needed revision of the reckoning at this point in any quarter would do no harm, while it would remove objections, and misconception, and embarrassment, and pretext, and real scandal too, against even the essential elements of the evangelical system of doctrines, and undermine whole economies of teaching otherwise and illegitimately based.

Error gets foothold in the wrong side of truth, and gains courage for combat, mainly from the excrescences which appear upon the face of truth,

and the imperfections which yet linger in its statement. We should allow no one to carry to the common sense of men, and to the common mind, that God is the "author of sin," in the sense of ordaining it, or "the greatest tyrant in the universe," for punishing that in us which is but the fulfilment of His purpose and way. Evangelical systems of faith should break from all such alliances, and all affiliation to a sentiment *every way*, so embarrassing to reason, and so abhorrent to the moral sense. Do this, and there will not be much call from candid and serious minds, for divergent interpretations of Christian truth. Intelligence has unity and adaptedness for truth. Conscience is an upright faculty. The aberrations of the intellect are chiefly from the waywardness of the passions, and the disturbing suggestions of the inferior nature. "Error in dogmatic statements," as Cousin, in substance, remarks, "is allied to truth, and an effort after it,—lies along the margin of truth, and gives some side of it. It is a truth imperfectly expressed,—with something interpolated, or something left out. It is a sort of first vision, where 'men are seen as trees walking.'"\*

\* History of Philosophy.—*Lectures.*

The elements of all truth lie in the reason, and all acquisition and perfection in knowledge are by way of development. We should not magnify differences in doctrinal exegesis, but seek a comprehensive Christianity up to the limits of truth. Conciliation is the method of success in all right thought and action. Calm down the passions and prejudices of men, and they will, under the promptings of reason and the moral sense, apprehend truth much as it is; and if some further analysis of it is from time to time demanded, this is but the law of history and all things. We are not at the end of theology yet, or of all valid exegesis of the Word of God, and do not need the "*incubus*" of an "*odium theologicum*" to repress all further inquiry into the mine of truth. Revelation is made to the principles of being given us, and is to be investigated and understood in the commerce of our minds therewith. There is homogeneity in truth, natural and revealed. Reason and the Bible accord with each other, and all advancement in the analysis of the laws of the one comes to the aid of a truthful and satisfactory exegesis of the other; so that, as is happily intimated by *Morell*, "philosophy has yet a work to do in behalf of the

simplification, comprehensiveness, and transparent directness of religious creeds, and of the dispensation and success of the gospel, which she has too long neglected.”

Philosophy gives the scientific basis of Divine truth, and its assured ground. It constitutes faith a dictate of reason, and a form of it, and thus sustains Revelation, and becomes a grateful helpmeet in the annunciation and triumphs of the Gospel.

Finally: *Our view harmonizes with the dictates and aspirations of all piety.* It is in sympathy with the moral convictions, and common sense, and practical judgments of men, in the intercourse of life not only, and on all questions of responsibility and duty, but with the spontaneous outgoings and desires of the soul, and the prayers and Christian efforts of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ. All concede that sin is in the world, and is here as the enemy of God and the antagonist of all righteousness. All read the Saviour's "parable of the tares of the field," and adhere to His Divine exposition of it. All unite in the common supplication, "Thy kingdom come, *thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*" All pray and toil in common for

the displacement of sin in their own hearts and lives, and in all the world, as being the kingdom and work of the enemy of all righteousness; and seek its overthrow everywhere as that "abominable thing" which is but abhorrent alike to the heart of piety and the heart of God.



THE END.





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