

AUSTIN
ON
THE ATTRIBUTES.

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ARGUMENTS

DRAWN FROM

THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD,

IN SUPPORT OF THE DOCTRINE

OF

UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

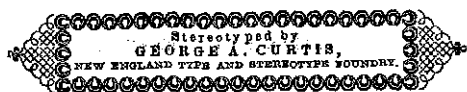
By JOHN MATHER AUSTIN,

AUTHOR OF A "VOICE TO YOUTH," "VOICE TO THE MARRIED," "CATECHISM ON
THE PARABLES," ETC.

"Come now and let us reason together."—*Isa.*

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THIS VOLUME
IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO
REV. HOSEA BALLOU,
OF BOSTON, MASS.,

AS A TOKEN OF THE HIGH ESTEEM OF THE AUTHOR, FOR ONE
WHO HAS FOR HALF A CENTURY

ABLY AND SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATED

THE DOCTRINE OF
A WORLD'S SALVATION.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
DIVISION OF THE PHYSICAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY

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PREFACE.

THE author would state distinctly at the outset, that in the following Arguments, he appeals directly to the *reason* of the reader. If it could possibly be deemed necessary to justify this course, the authority and example for adopting it, are found in the Volume of Inspiration. In the requirement of the Most High, "Come, now, and let us *reason* together"—in the inquiry of the Saviour, "Why even of yourselves *judge* ye not what is *right*?"—in the declaration of St. Paul, "I speak as to *wise* men : *judge* ye what I say."—an abundant authority is found for appealing to man's reason in regard to religious subjects. It would be difficult to determine for what purpose the faculty of reason was bestowed by the Creator, if not for its exercise—especially on a subject so purely speculative and spiritual as religion. Indeed, the Bible is a revelation to man's reason—its doctrines, its requirements, its injunctions and exhortations, are all based upon reason, and addressed to reason. Take away this faculty, or shut out its light from the human mind, and the Scriptures would be enshrouded in darkness, and their influence and usefulness destroyed. It is true the legitimate exercise of reason is exceedingly dangerous to all doctrines embodying error, as light is dangerous to everything that requires darkness to conceal its deformities. But surely it will not be contended that this is a sound argument for the abandonment of this valuable faculty. God's truth has nothing to apprehend from reason. It is itself the embodiment of pure reason.

Hence the more faithfully and closely it is weighed in the scales of reason, the more apparent become its consistencies and beauties. It is exceedingly important, however, that the reader should ever be careful to distinguish between that which is *above* the comprehension of man's reason, and that which is in *opposition* to reason. By confounding these extremes together, great disparagement has been cast upon reason, and much injury done to truth. As an illustration—to declare that the Universe has *bounds*, would be directly to *contradict* reason. To assert that the voids of space are without bound or limit, would be to utter that which perfectly *agrees* with reason, but which, at the same time, surpasses the comprehension of reason. Would it be consistent to confound this contradiction, and this want of comprehension together, and insist that reason is not to be trusted in either case? So, also, if it were asserted that a God of infinite Goodness voluntarily and deliberately put into operation causes for the production of infinite evil, it would be making a proposition in self-evident *contradiction* to reason. On the other hand, the declaration that a God of infinite Goodness must necessarily design all his plans and movements to eventuate in boundless and eternal *good* alone, harmonizes perfectly with the decisions of reason—but the times and seasons, and all the ways and means, which Divine Wisdom adopts to accomplish these plans, are beyond the comprehension of man's present reason. But shall we therefore confound that which *opposes*, with that which *agrees* with, but *outraches* reason, and conclude it would be as consistent to believe the former as the latter? Equally consistent would it be to reject those plain dictates of reason which declare the existence of an intelligent, overruling Creator, because the origin and mode of his being cannot be comprehended! Man ought and must follow his reason, as his guiding star; although he is unavoidably compelled, in some instances, to believe that which reason

declares *must* be, even when he cannot comprehend *how* it can be !

It has been the object of the author, in these Arguments, to confine himself to the consideration of *fundamental* points in theology, believing that, when the mind has clear and consistent conceptions of first principles of religion, and comprehends their bearings and deductions, there is little danger of becoming involved in error on more general points. In prosecuting this purpose, he did not seek so much for *originality* of argument, as for plainness and directness—it being his wish to place his thoughts in a form so distinct, and, if possible, so self-evident, as to carry conviction, not only to the intelligent and candid, but to the minds of the most faithless and bigoted. The reader who is conversant with the arguments usually brought in support of the doctrine of Universal Salvation, while it is hoped he will discover some suggestions of a new and interesting description, will undoubtedly find many positions with which he is perfectly familiar. But it should be borne in mind that there are thousands in our country, to whom almost every argument in these pages will be new ; and to such minds they will possess all the novelty and power of *originality*. It was in especial view to the benefit of this class, who are strangers to the doctrine of a world's salvation, and the arguments upon which it is based, that this volume has been prepared. It has been thought that, by bringing together in one connected series, all the principal evidences, embracing “things both new and old,” drawn from the attributes of God, in support of this doctrine, it could not fail of throwing light and conviction into many minds, hitherto involved in darkness and error. And the author flatters himself that few believers in a limited salvation can read these pages with candor and with suitable reflection, without at least having some decided inroads made upon their former views of the extent of God's saving grace—while it is his

earnest prayer that the volume may be instrumental in opening the eyes of many to the consistency and glory of the gospel of Universal Redemption.

It was deemed desirable that each chapter should possess within itself a complete Argument in favor of "the restitution of all things." In consequence of aiming at this, the reader will very probably find some repetition in sentiment and phraseology, in different portions of the volume—for which his forbearance is craved. All the objections usually urged against the Salvation of the World, which are attempted to be drawn from reason, the author has endeavored to take up and examine frankly and candidly, in the course of the series. How far he has succeeded in showing their want of consistency and strength, is a point which the reader must determine. For an answer to those objections against this doctrine, which are predicated on the Scriptures, the reader is referred to numerous other works already extant.

With these preliminary observations, this volume is submitted to the attention of the public. Whatever may be its imperfections, it has been written with an ardent desire that it may perform a mission of Good, and lead many minds into those views of God, his perfections, government and purposes, which will tend to enlighten the understanding, purify and enlarge the affections, and fill the soul with that joy which is "unspeakable and full of glory." That God will bless it with these desirable fruits, is the sincere prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

May, 1844.

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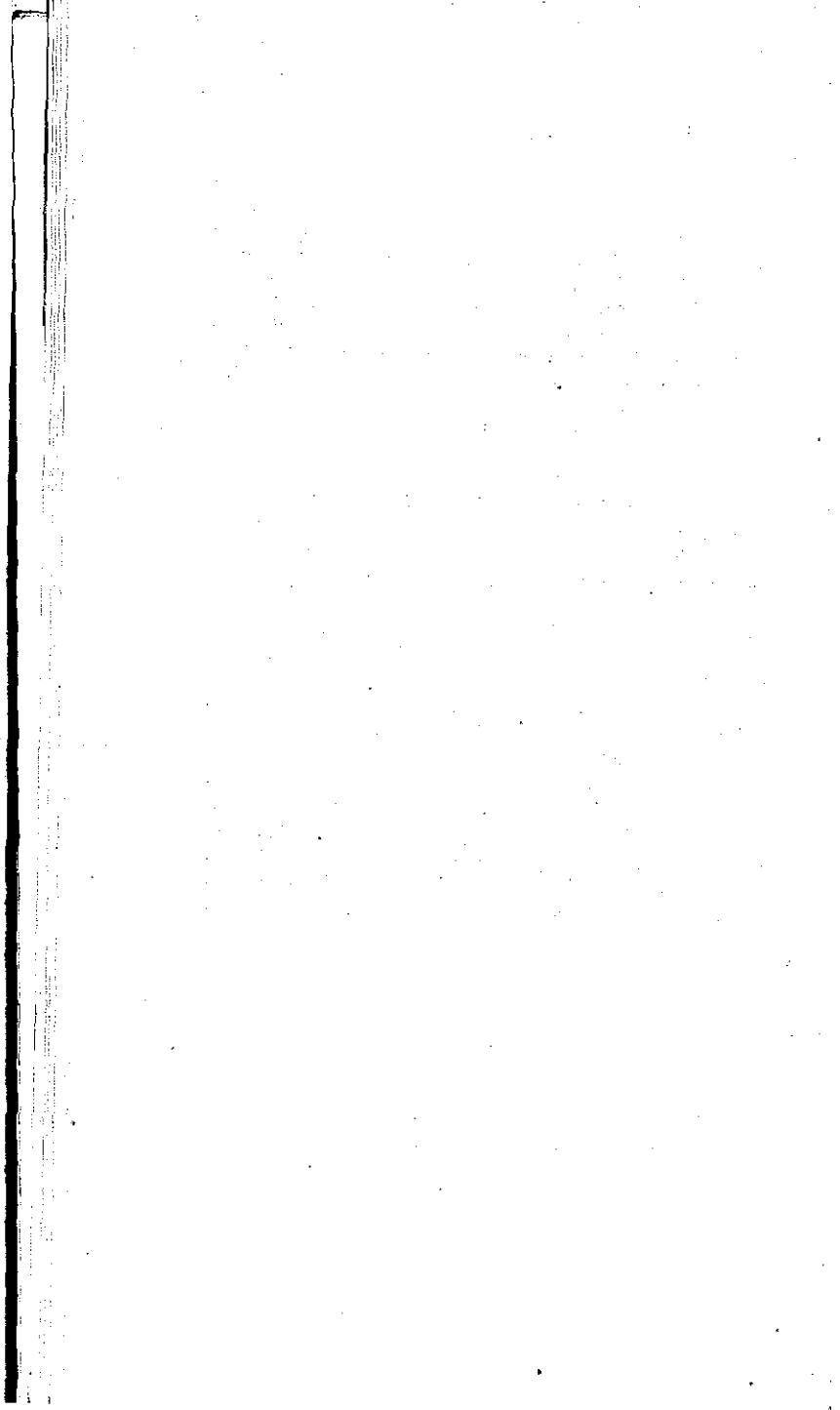
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ARGUMENTS

FROM THE

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD.

ARGUMENT I.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

*"The just Creator condescends to write,
In beams of inextinguishable light,
His names of Wisdom, Goodness, Power and Love,
On all that blooms below, or shines above ;
To catch the wandering notice of mankind,
And teach the world, if not perversely blind,
His gracious Attributes, and prove the share
His offspring hold in his paternal care."*

A RIGHT UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATTRIBUTES.

NEXT in importance to the acknowledgment of the existence of a Supreme Being, is a right understanding and appreciation of his attributes. To err in our conceptions of the nature, the office, or the influence of the divine attributes, is to commit a mistake on a fundamental point, and one which will necessarily affect the whole circle of our religious views, and give a false coloring to the entire economy of the Most High. The degree of confidence and peace which religion imparts, depends mainly, if not wholly, upon the characteristics which we suppose Deity to possess. To attribute to him any of the

imperfections of man, or to believe that his attributes, although perfect in themselves, operate imperfectly in the movements of Providence, or will fail in producing their legitimate fruits, in the ultimate results of creation, is to dim with dark clouds the light which shines from the great central truth of the Divine Existence, change to painful anxiety the happiness with which it would otherwise fill the soul, and make the theism of the Christian little better than the polytheism of the Pagan. Hence the importance of making the attributes of God the frequent subject of deep, mature reflection and patient study. Not only is it necessary to examine the nature and office of each separate attribute, but the relation which each bears to all, and all to each, and the influence and results of their combined action in the councils of the Most High. Whoever is right here, cannot fail, in the exercise of the plain common sense with which he is endowed, to be right in all the essential points of religious faith, nor fail to arrive at conclusions as reasonable and consistent as they are elevating and joyful.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ATTRIBUTE OF GOODNESS

In the bright circle of Jehovah's perfections, it cannot be determined, that any one attribute is more important than another. All are infinitely important, infinitely essential. They exist in harmony together, and in an all-perfect harmony they act—each drawing vitality, power, and boundless efficiency from the sympathetic coöperation of all. But, if it were possible that one of the attributes

of God could be more important than another, the supremacy would unquestionably be given to *Goodness*! Infinitely better would it be for the universe, if the Creator were deficient in Wisdom and Power, and perfect in Goodness, than deficient in Goodness and perfect in Wisdom and Power. In the former case, his designs would be pure and merciful, though he might fail of accomplishing them. In the latter, his ability to *execute* would be perfect; but it would only be a perfect execution of *evil* purposes. If a being of the former character could do *anything*, it would be something *good*. If one of the latter character could do *everything*, it would be everything *evil*! A belief in a God of the one description would inspire love for his Goodness, mingled with regret for his inability; a belief in the other would fill the soul alone with constant alarm and frightful forebodings. And in proportion as an individual's religious faith approaches either of these extremes, in regard to God's character, to the same degree will he experience the emotions above described.

GOODNESS ASCRIBED TO GOD IN THE SCRIPTURES.

That Goodness is one of the attributes of God, is a truth revealed and established by the repeated declarations of Holy Writ:—"Thou, Lord, art good."¹ "There is none good but one, that is God."² The Scriptures not only thus distinctly assert that God is a being possessing Goodness, but

¹ Psalms lxxxvi. 5.

² Matt. xix. 17.

they are particular to mention many very valuable traits which characterize that goodness. They declare it to be *great*: "And delighted themselves in thy *great* goodness."¹ They describe it as being *abundant*: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and *abundant* in goodness and truth."² Impartial: "The Lord is good unto *all*."³ Rich: "Despisest thou the *riches* of his goodness?"⁴ Active: "Thou art good, and *doest* good."⁵ It is a parental goodness: "What man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven, give *good things* to them that ask him?"⁶ It is a goodness that extends not only to the pure and righteous, but to the sinful, even while in their sins: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were *dead* in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."⁷ Its display produces a renovating influence on the hearts of the wicked: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance."⁸ It reaches to enemies: "Love your enemies, and *do good*, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for he is *kind* unto the unthankful and evil."⁹ Finally,

¹ Neh. ix. 25.² Ex. xxxiv. 6.³ Ps. cxlv. 9.⁴ Rom. ii. 4.⁵ Ps. cxix. 68.⁶ Matt. vii. 9-11.⁷ Eph. ii. 4, 5.⁸ Rom. ii. 4.⁹ Luke vi. 35.

his Goodness is constant and unending: "The goodness of God endureth continually."¹

GOD'S GOODNESS MANIFESTED IN NATURE.

The Author of the book of inspiration has written also a wider book, in the works of nature, which all are capable of reading and understanding.

"Nature is but a name for an effect,
Whose cause is God."

These two volumes must harmonize in their testimony of the attributes of Deity, or their declarations are worthy of no consideration. The voice of inspiration emphatically declares that Goodness is one of the characteristics of the divine nature. Does the voice which speaks in nature's works, respond to and corroborate this declaration; and is the *truth* and the *reality* of the Goodness of the Father of spirits, thus made evident to our senses? There can be no question on this point. Upon everything that has come from the Creator's hand, the impress of Goodness is enstamped. More visible to our imperfect senses in some of his works than in others, yet, in all, clearly traceable to the discerning and reflecting mind. In the warm and vivifying light of the sun, in the moon and stars, which

"As refulgent lamps of night,
O'er heaven's clear azure shed their sacred light"—

in the falling rains and sweetly distilling dews, in

¹ Psalms lii. 1.

the profuse fruitfulness of the earth, in the changing of the seasons, and the mutations of day and night, in every ray of light, in every particle of matter—in each and all—the pure and impartial Goodness of God is manifested in unequivocal distinctness. It is not saying too much, to exclaim, in the accommodated language of an ancient poet, —

“Goodness is the air;
 Goodness is the earth;
 Goodness is the heaven;
 All is Goodness!”

In the laws of nature, in the properties of matter in the operations of the elements, everything is evidently designed for good. Each discovery and application of nature's powers in the mechanic arts; every new property, quality, or capability, which science is constantly bringing to light from the great arcana of nature, demonstrates the same important truth, that to produce *good*, is the object of all. In God's vast works there has been, there can be, nothing discovered, which was evidently designed to produce Evil. The most poisonous plants and minerals have an office of good to fulfil. The rushing wind, the furious tornado, the vivid lightning, the loud crashing thunderbolt, so full of dismay to timid man, are pregnant with Goodness, and lavish blessings upon a world which would perish without them. All the works and operations of nature claim our wonder and admiration!

“Mysterious round! what skill, what force divine,
 Deep felt in these appear! a simple train,
 Yet so delightful mix'd, with such kind art,

Such beauty and beneficence combin'd;
 Shade, unperceived, so softening into shade;
 And all so forming an harmonious whole,
 That, as they still succeed, they ravish still."

It is, then, a truth asserted by revelation, corroborated by nature, and made certain by every faculty of the mind and every sense of the body,—a truth universally acknowledged and assented to by believers in the divine existence, that Goodness is one of the fundamental attributes of the Deity. He is infinitely, impartially, immutably, and everlastingly good,—“good unto all.” He is a vast fountain of good, “running over in rivers of communicated joys.”

“————— Enough to know
 That thou art Lord! Thy Universal Love
 Pervades creation; on each living form
 Showers down its proper happiness.”

The existence of this attribute being thus firmly established, it should be allowed its appropriate place, office, and influence in the divine councils. It affords an immovable and perfect foundation, upon which all reflections and views of the character of God, and his purposes, must rest, in order to be consistent and true.

GOODNESS A MORAL ATTRIBUTE.

It should be borne in mind, that the Goodness of the Most High is an *infinite* moral attribute, and hence, must necessarily exert an *infinite* moral influence in the councils of heaven. From its very nature, it is utterly impossible that it should ever

assent, in any conceivable case or contingency, to the *permanent* existence of its opposite, *evil*! or that it should assent to *any* evil, except of that *temporary* character which infinite Wisdom can so overrule as that it shall eventuate in the production or promotion of *permanent good* to all who are, for a season, subject to its pains. Hence, to ascribe evil to God; to believe him to be in the remotest degree, possessed of purposes of evil towards a creature he has formed; to suppose, in the plans or objects of creation, the Deity designed, allowed, or foresaw, that irremediable evil, even to one sentient being, would be the result of that creation; is to start with a fundamental error, which will bring into a distortion with its own hideous features, every other religious sentiment held in connection with it. That it is an error is self-evident. It is based on the supposition that God's goodness is not infinite, that it does not exert an infinite influence in the divine councils, or that infinite Goodness violates its own inherent nature, and prompts to infinite Evil, or consents without any possible motive, to that which is a violation of its every dictate; and that God can cherish two perfectly opposite principles—good and evil; all of which are moral impossibilities!

GOODNESS THE ORIGINATOR OF GOD'S WORKS.

Goodness, being the distinguishing characteristic, the great moral attribute of Jehovah, it must necessarily be the voluntary *originator*, or prompter, of all his designs and actions. I say the *voluntary* originator, for there manifestly cannot be any *necessity*

above God, to urge him to action. Every impulse must originate in, and of himself, and must proceed from the promptings of this moral attribute of his nature. Whatever, therefore, the Creator does, or designs to do, it is certain he is influenced by the promptings of pure Goodness; and it is equally certain that he engages in no work except he first be moved to it by the inherent impulse of his boundless and impartial Goodness. As it is an impossibility that any moral principle can prompt to that which is in opposition to its own nature, infinite Goodness could never have moved God to any work, or consented that any work in creation should commence, which would or could result in endless evil, or any work which could have such evil for its end, or which would produce it directly or indirectly, either as its ultimate object, or as an incidental effect, flowing immediately or remotely from it, even though not included in its legitimate design! On the contrary, as infinite Goodness prompted Jehovah to all his works, whatever being or object has been created, must ultimately be in such a condition as will perfectly answer the desire and expectation of that Goodness which moved its existence.

GOODNESS A SURE FOUNDATION FOR FAITH.

Are not these premises and conclusions according to the dictates of clear reason and plain common sense? On the foundation of these plain truths, can we not, with the utmost consistency, rest one of the great pillars of a faith in the ultimate salvation and happiness of the human race? The Father of

spirits was moved to the creation of the family of man by the promptings of a pure and infinite Goodness. He saw from the beginning what would be the result of such a creation, what would be the final condition of every being formed. Whatever that condition will be, it was expressly for it that each one was brought into life. Did Goodness prompt to the creation of any soul, that it might ultimately come into a state of ceaseless evil? We have already seen this to be a moral impossibility, inasmuch as Goodness would contradict its own nature in cherishing such a desire. Neither could this attribute urge the Deity to the formation of a being, foreseeing, (as he must, if such a result would take place,) that by any event, by any train of actions, by any ignorance, unbelief, or disobedience, or by any fortuitous combination of circumstances possible, its existence would terminate in irremediable wretchedness. This, as in the other case, would be equally a contradiction of the very nature of Goodness. It would evidently be the dictate of Goodness not to create at all, unless existence could be conferred under such circumstances, that it would prove a final and everlasting blessing to all upon whom it was bestowed. But the human race are in existence. Without any agency, volition, or even consent of their own, they find themselves in being. Each one has been created voluntarily by a God of infinite Goodness; each one, therefore, is actually the effect, the fruit, of an impulse of infinite Goodness, acting upon Jehovah, and urging him to the work, with the ultimate destiny of the creature dis-

tinctly in view! Is it not, then, the self-evident deduction of reason, as clear and manifest as sunlight, that each human being, thus created, must ultimately arrive at such a condition of happiness as shall be dictated by infinite Goodness? If man's reason can deduce a legitimate effect from a well established and acknowledged cause, then the conclusion at which we have arrived is worthy the reception and confidence of every intelligent mind.

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

The great truth presented by the course of reasoning above pursued is so consistent and obvious, so worthy of God, so honorable to his perfections and his government, so joy-inspiring and consolatory, that none, it is believed, could be found to object, were it not that the minds of multitudes are early impregnated with views of an opposite character—views derived from creeds which were framed by men whose conceptions of God's attributes must have been of the most imperfect description. A consideration of one or two objections to the position we occupy, may be profitably attended to.

GOODNESS OPPOSED TO TEMPORARY, AS WELL AS ENDLESS, SUFFERING.

It is urged, that the argument we frame upon the influence of God's infinite Goodness is unsound, inasmuch as, if this attribute would forbid endless suffering, it would also equally forbid *temporary* suffering; but as we know that temporary suffering does exist, and as it must be the dictate of infinite

Goodness to allow it to exist, therefore, that goodness may, with the same propriety, allow a state of endless suffering.

It will require but little reflection to discover that this objection *proves too much*, and is as destructive to the system of those who urge it, as it can be to that against which it is brought. All the strength the objection possesses is drawn from the assumption, that whatever is consistent with infinite Goodness *in this life*, will be consistent with it *forever*. Let us try this principle. Do not good men, righteous, pious men, suffer disappointment, misfortune, bereavement, sorrow, and pain in this life? Then it is perfectly consistent with infinite Goodness, that they should thus suffer here; and as it is consistent with Goodness for them to endure these evils in *this life*, it will be equally consistent with Goodness for the same class to experience the same sufferings in the next life and *forever*! The popular theology of the day represents the sinner's life as one of prosperity and pleasure, while the life of the righteous is one of trials, crosses, and tribulations. Now, if it is consistent with infinite Goodness, that the wicked should experience enjoyment in this world, and the righteous trouble and sorrow, then it will be consistent with the same goodness, that the wicked shall be happy, and the righteous sorrowful, in the world to come, and forever!

OBJECTION ABANDONED.

If to these positions it is replied, that it may be consistent with divine Goodness to allow the right-

eous to endure suffering in this world, but would be manifestly inconsistent with it to allow them to suffer forever, then the whole ground of the objection is abandoned; it is then conceded, that a state of things may be allowed *temporarily*, consistent with Goodness, which would be infinitely inconsistent with the same goodness to allow *forever*. And thus the soundness of our position is allowed, that the infinite Goodness of God, while permitting *temporary* evil in the present state of being, would unequivocally forbid everlasting evil. Or if, again, it is said the Scriptures expressly declare, that the righteous shall be happy in the life to come, notwithstanding they endure suffering here, I reply, that, with equal distinctness, the Scriptures declare, that notwithstanding the human race are here subjected to sin and evil, yet "the creature [or the whole creation] shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God,"¹ and that "all men shall be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth."²

DISTINCTION BETWEEN TEMPORARY AND ENDLESS SUFFERING.

The objection we are noticing overlooks the infinite distinction between *temporary* and *endless* suffering. The former is perfectly compatible with infinite Goodness; the latter is directly its *opposite*,

¹ Rom. viii. 21. The original Greek word, which is here rendered *creature*, is, in verse 22, translated "*creation*."

² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

and in everlasting violation of its every principle. Temporary evil can be made the medium of good, as when the physician administers nauseous drugs, to restore health, or the parent inflicts chastisement on the child, to preserve it from wrong doing. The case of Joseph and his brethren is an eminent scriptural instance, showing that temporary evil is allowable in compatibility with Goodness, and that it can be made to produce good. It was a great evil to Joseph to be sold into slavery; and it was a heinous sin in his brethren thus to trample on justice, and violate the bonds of fraternal regard. But an infinitely wise Providence so directed affairs that this evil was not only temporary, as an evil, but became the source of immense benefit to all concerned in it, and to the whole kingdom of Egypt. Infinite Goodness allowed the evil to be committed on Joseph, because it foresaw that good would come from it. "Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."¹ Goodness, then, can consent to temporary evil as a *means*, for the sake of the benefit which can flow from it. But ceaseless evil is not a means, but an *end*,—a fixed, unalterable state. It cannot, therefore, result in good, but is an infinite injury, an unmitigated, eternal loss! It is the everlasting antipodes of goodness. No attribute of God can possibly be reconciled to its *opposite*, as an *end*. Justice can never be reconciled to endless injustice. Goodness can never be reconciled to everlasting evil. Goodness may well be reconciled to

¹ Genesis l. 20.

evil of a temporary duration, to terminate in a greater good to those who experience it, than could otherwise be effected. This would be in perfect harmony with its legitimate promptings. But an evil that ends not, must necessarily be forever barren of all good, and can be only fruitful in unmixed wretchedness. And Goodness can no more assent to its existence, than it can change its own nature. Hence our position is untouched, and it remains evident that infinite Goodness, while it would permit man to endure temporary evil as a means to greater benefits, forever forbids that a creature of God should be brought into an existence which would result in his endless suffering!

HUMAN AFFAIRS IN A RUINOUS CONDITION.

Another objection to the argument we build on the infinite Goodness of Deity, is, that although God desires the welfare of all his creatures, yet human affairs are in such a condition, that it is impossible to promote the good of the whole, without the suffering of a part; and that in such a condition of things, it is the dictate of pure and infinite Goodness, that one portion should be made miserable forever in order that the remainder may enter upon endless happiness—as the benevolent surgeon, with the kindest feelings towards his patient, amputates a diseased limb to secure life and health to the whole body.

The reflecting reader cannot fail to discover several very manifest contradictions in the position embraced in this objection. It will come more prop-

erly within the design of another Argument to notice the infinite lack of wisdom, foresight, and power which it attributes to God, in supposing that, under his immediate direction and government, human affairs have become involved in such a confused and contradictory state, that his Goodness is *compelled* to violate the impulses of its own nature, and desire the misery of one part of mankind to secure the happiness of another. The simple statement of the proposition would seem to be abundantly sufficient to show its unreasonableness to all clear and unprejudiced minds.

OBJECTION ABSURD IN TERMS.

The objection is a contradiction in terms. It is absurd to say the greatest good of *the whole*, requires the wretchedness of a *part*. The first limb of the proposition covers the second; the *whole*, of course, includes all the *parts* which compose it. Hence, it is virtually saying of one class of human beings, that their own greatest *good* demands, and is promoted by, their own endless *woe*! The greatest good of *all* men is necessarily the greatest good of *every* man. This is the dictate of the first rudiments of plain reason. Nor does it alter the proposition in the least, to say that God desires the greatest good of the greatest number. The greatest number of mankind is *the whole*; and the good of the greatest number is the good of the whole, and every individual composing the whole. The objection, then, properly stated, is this: that the *endless good* of one part of God's creatures cannot be

secured unless he inflicts *endless evil* upon another portion; and that, in such circumstances, infinite Goodness demands that the evil should be inflicted for the sake of the good.

OBJECTION DEFICIENT IN ITS PREMISES.

This objection is singularly deficient in its premises. It *assumes* that which should be proved. It takes for granted the very fact which is the chief corner-stone of its strength, and which should first be clearly and explicitly established—namely, that the endless happiness of one part of mankind cannot be secured without the endless wretchedness of the remainder. This position we emphatically deny; and no proof of its truth has been offered, or can possibly be offered. It is true, the surgeon is sometimes justified in amputating a limb, in order to preserve life and give health to the whole body. But why is he justified? Simply because he has no skill to heal the diseased limb. If he had ample power to restore the injured part to health and soundness, and thus to preserve the whole body, would he then be justified in amputating a limb? Assuredly not. Is the Creator under the *necessity* of cutting off one limb of the great body of mankind, to save the remainder? “Is there no balm in Gilead? no physician there?” Has the Father of spirits remained passive, and deliberately and knowingly allowed a disease to prey upon his children, which he has no skill to remove? Would even an imperfect earthly parent manifest such palpable indifference to the welfare of his offspring?

Who then, can, who dare, charge the Parent of the world with such wilful, infinite neglect of the good of his creatures? That he should allow man to become, for a season, subject to moral disease, to result in restoration to spiritual health, is reconcilable with his Wisdom and Goodness. And that he has at his command infinite resources, by which he is abundantly able to heal the most polluted of the sons of men, and make them pure and holy, is one of the clearest dictates of reason, and is, moreover, proved by many declarations of Scripture, and by the conversion of a Saul of Tarsus, and multitudes of the vilest transgressors in all ages. What Jehovah can do for one sinner, he can do for all sinners; and what he *can* do, we ought to honor him enough to believe he *will* do, when it is called for by his goodness, his holiness, his love, his compassion, and every attribute of his divine nature. So far from it being a purpose of God's wise providence to allow those now polluted by sin to remain so forever, it is his express purpose to save sinners from their sins: "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*"¹ If God, through his Son, is able to save the *chief* of sinners, he must be abundantly able to save every other transgressor. It, therefore, is manifestly erroneous to take the position, that Deity will be compelled to bind one part of the human race in sin and torment forever, to save the remainder.

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

That the omniscient and all-perfect God should become reduced to such an extreme and awful dilemma, violates all just conceptions of his wisdom and foresight; it robs him of all knowledge and understanding as applicable to his government of the affairs of his creatures, and makes that government as feeble and blind, as lacking in the dictates of common prudence and discretion, as imbecile and erring, as the government of the most weak and ignorant of earthly rulers. It is in vain to refer to the present existence of sin and evil in the world, to prove that God will be compelled to perpetuate sin and evil forever, in order to secure good. For, as we have already shown, and as is every day witnessed, he is able to overrule present evil to good. And it requires but slight acquaintance with the past history of the world, and but little confidence in Jehovah's Wisdom, to believe that he will so overrule *all* evil, as that it shall not have the slightest power to prevent the boundless gratification of every possible impulse of his infinite and impartial Goodness.

SUPPOSE THE OBJECTION WELL FOUNDED.

The premises, the foundation, of the objection being entirely baseless, the whole fabric loses its force and falls to naught. But suppose we allow it to be well founded. Suppose it is assented, that through a lack of foresight or wisdom in the Creator, or in any other manner, the affairs of the human family had become so lamentably confused, so infinitely disjointed, that one part could not become endlessly

happy, unless another part were made endlessly miserable. The misery which the sufferers would be made to endure, would be to them an *infinite evil*. The whole transaction would then be upon the principle of doing *evil* that *good* may come. St. Paul considered it a slander upon himself and his brother apostles, when they were charged with preaching that evil might be done to produce good. If such an imputation is slanderous when charged to imperfect man, what shall we say of it when charged to the "God of love?" Is it not in the highest degree blasphemous?

What description of good can that be, which is predicated upon continued evil? What kind of happiness is that which is promoted by the existence and perpetuity of woe? What would be the moral and spiritual condition of a class of beings, whose felicity could be obtained and secured only by beholding the ceaseless torments of myriads of fellow-beings, among whom are dear relatives and friends? If a king were each day to stretch one of his subjects on a rack, to give pleasure to himself and his court, how would he be viewed by the world? Or, if the affairs of his kingdom had fallen into such a morbid and diseased state; that, much against his will, he was compelled to torment one portion of his people constantly, in the presence of the remainder, to make them yield any sort of obedience, what would be thought of the wisdom and prudence he had exercised in administering his government? If a father should roast one of his children over a slow fire, to make the others happy, and to keep them

within the bounds of obedience, what should we think of the wisdom and goodness of the father's government, and the character of his children? Let the reader candidly answer these inquiries, and reflect how vastly more manifest is their deformity and hideousness when made in respect to the government and providence of our heavenly Father!

OBJECTION BASELESS.

This whole objection, that Deity has so conducted the affairs of the human race, or has allowed them to take such a direction, as to render it necessary, in any view of the case, that one portion should sink into endless sin and wretchedness, violates every attribute of the Godhead, and could never have been harbored a moment in a sane mind, were it not that men, to maintain preconceived opinions and favorite creeds, will sometimes violate the plainest rules of logic and the simplest dictates of reason. If we can put the slightest confidence in the deductions of the reasoning faculties, it must be perfectly evident, that a God of infinite Goodness, whose eye scanned the end from the beginning, if he could not have formed the human race under any circumstances except such as rendered it necessary, not that one *man*, but that the smallest insect in existence, should become forever miserable, to make the race happy, he would have allowed them to remain in the peaceful sleep of nonentity. Creating, under such circumstances, would be predicating the happiness of the world upon the existence of an *infinite evil*, an everlasting *wrong*,

which is as peremptorily forbidden by even-handed *justice*, as it is in opposition to every impulse of Goodness. However great or lasting a *good* may be, it can never rightfully rest, in the providence of a perfect God, on an endless evil.

THE ARGUMENT NOT INVALIDATED.

The argument, then, for the final salvation of the human race, which is to be drawn from the Goodness of God, cannot be affected in the slightest degree by the objections we have noticed. Based on the admitted premise of infinite Goodness in the Deity, it moves on with irresistible power, to a conclusion as joyful as it is reasonable, and establishes that conclusion clearly and immovably. God's Goodness being the original prompter to the creation of the human family, however diversified may be the course pursued, however contradictory or mysterious to our feeble senses the circumstances in which they are involved, yet through such changes and vicissitudes, and at such times and seasons, as infinite and unerring Wisdom may dictate, all at last must eventuate in precisely such a state of things as that Goodness desired originally, and from the beginning saw, would be the final result!

"All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction which thou canst not see:
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good!"

ARGUMENT II.

THE WISDOM OF GOD.

"Wisdom and might and love are thine;
Prostrate before thy face we fall,
Confess thine attributes divine,
And own thee sovereign Lord of all."

WISDOM A FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTE OF DEITY.

INFINITE Wisdom is one of the fundamental attributes of the Deity. A belief in the existence of this perfection, is an acknowledged element in every form of Christian faith, and is vitally essential to all right conceptions of the character and providence of God. We are not left to *conjecture*, as to the presence of Wisdom in the divine councils. The Scriptures are very emphatic in their declarations on this point: "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever; for wisdom and might are his."¹ "He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion."² "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all."³ St. Paul denominates God's Wisdom a "manifold wisdom,"⁴ or a Wisdom of *many folds*—

¹ Dan. ii. 20. ² Jer. x. 12. ³ Ps. civ. 24. ⁴ Eph. iii. 10.

i. e., a diversified, multifarious Wisdom, that reaches to every conceivable object and work, whether of infinite magnitude or of the most minute proportions. The same apostle declares that "the *foolishness* of God is wiser than men."¹ In this strong expression, St. Paul supposes an impossibility, for the purpose of magnifying the Wisdom of the Creator. If it were possible for foolishness to pertain to God, that *foolishness* would infinitely transcend the highest pinnacle of man's wisdom. If such would be the *foolishness* of Jehovah, what must be the perfection of his *Wisdom*? By another construction, the Apostle's language asserts, that those ways of Providence which appear *foolish* to man, are all ordained and directed by unerring Wisdom.

THE ATTRIBUTES INFINITELY ACTIVE.

To the believer in the Holy Scriptures, it is enough that they ascribe Wisdom to the Most High. This alone is sufficient to establish his faith in the existence of this perfection. But it is exceedingly interesting and satisfactory, to note the corroborative testimony on this point, which meets the view in every direction. The Creator's attributes are all infinitely *active*; they are revealed not only in his *word*, but in his *works*. Not like man, does the Deity *profess* a virtue or a quality, which he does *not possess*. The universe is a type, an outward transcript, a visible embodiment of the perfections of his nature—an eternal monument of the truthful-

¹ 1 Cor. i. 25.

ness of his professions. In nature's works we behold the characteristics of nature's God. "For the *invisible* things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood *by the things that are made*, even his eternal power and godhead."¹ In the works of creation there is shadowed forth not only a Goodness which is impartial and infinite, but a Wisdom which is in every respect coëxtensive and correspondent. Most beautiful mingling of the attributes of that Holy One—

"Whose Power and Wisdom, Love and Grace,
Are greater than the round of time,
And wider than the bounds of space."

WISDOM DISPLAYED IN THE WORKS OF CREATION.

To behold the most amazing and glorious displays of the attribute of Wisdom, we have but to raise our eyes to a contemplation of "the spangled heavens." In those sapphire fields, there is written an universal language, which can be read and understood by all nations. In the formation of the heavenly bodies; in their appearance and their movements—world revolving around world, system moving within system, with a velocity surpassing the utmost stretch of human imagination, and yet without the slightest "variableness or the shadow of turning"—in the original conception and arrangement, the execution and continued operation, of those laws which gave them birth, and hold them in their allotted spheres—we behold a tangible,

¹ Rom. i. 20.

living, and eternal testimony, which no man can gainsay or doubt, of the infinite Intelligence and boundless Wisdom of the Being who gave them existence.

"This prospect vast, what is it?—Weighed aright,

'Tis nature's system of divinity.

'Tis elder Scripture, writ by God's own hand :

Scripture authentic ! uncorrupt by man.

* * * * *

Divine Instructor ! thy first volume, this,

For man's perusal, all in CAPITALS !

In moon and stars (heaven's golden alphabet !)

Emblazed to seize the sight ; who runs may read ;

Who reads, can understand. 'Tis unconfined

To Christian land, or Jewry ; fairly writ,

In language universal, to mankind."

But it is not in the heavens alone that God has displayed his Wisdom. It is seen in our own world, and all that pertains to it : "The earth is full of thy riches."¹ The same Wisdom which formed the ponderous sun, constructed the grain of sand ; the same Wisdom which bedecked the heavens with sparkling constellations, devotes its energies to rear the fragile flower of the valley, to paint its leaves with rainbow dyes, and enable it to breathe its odor to the grateful breeze ; the Wisdom which created the lofty archangel "who adores and burns," brought into exercise the same intelligence in ushering into existence, not only man, but the insect which lives and sports but for an hour ! Plainly can we see—

—— "In the vast and the minute,
The unambiguous footsteps of the God,

¹ Ps. civ. 24.

Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds."

Let the microscope be placed before the eye—bring up to view and to examination, the nations of living creatures, and the atoms of matter, which elude the vision of the unaided sight, and in all will be discovered the impress of the same "manifold" wisdom, in adapting each living animalcula, and each distinct atom, to its designed station and office, that is displayed in the creation of angelic beings and the formation of systems of worlds! The operations of God's Wisdom are as perfect in the inferior as the superior—in the finite as the infinite—in the creature that lives but a day, as in the cherubim that is endowed with immortality.

"To him no high, no low, no great, no small;
He fills, he bounds, connects, and equals all."

GOD'S WISDOM INFINITELY COMPREHENSIVE.

To have a just appreciation of the Wisdom of God, the fact must not for a moment be lost sight of, that it is infinitely comprehensive in its nature, and infinitely perfect in its operations—and that it is an infinitely *practical* Wisdom; being as capable of *executing*, as it is of *conceiving*. An *infinite* Wisdom must possess *omnipercipience*—the power of foreseeing all events that ever will or can transpire throughout eternity—not only those which are of the utmost importance, but those which are of the most trivial description. An infinite Wisdom must also be endowed with *omniscience*—a knowledge of all trans-

actions, both past and to come. No event can transpire, no contingency arise, no combination of circumstances possibly take place, through any instrumentality or agency, whether direct or indirect, that this Wisdom does not clearly foreknow, distinctly understand, and abundantly provide for. Unless God's Wisdom is endowed with this foresight and foreknowledge, it is not *infinite*—it is not capable of originating and executing those great plans of operation which reach through all time to come. In this case, the future would be an infinite *blank* to Jehovah; he would be compelled to act entirely on uncertainties and contingencies, and be constantly exposed to errors and mistakes, which would be liable to involve himself and the whole universe in a state of utter confusion and wretchedness! But the Wisdom of the Creator being *infinite*, must possess foresight and foreknowledge, and hence can be involved in *no oversight*, and can commit *no mistake* in the management of the affairs of the world. And any theory which contradicts these self-evident truths, must necessarily be erroneous.

We are bound to believe that Wisdom is the handmaiden of the Creator, and accompanies him in *all* he does. If it were possible to suppose he ever exercises different degrees of Wisdom, it is but rational to conclude that the more momentous the work, and the more important the interest at stake, the greater is the amount of Wisdom he brings into exercise in regard to it. And inasmuch as the creation and final destiny of the countless millions of the human race, is by far the most important work in

which it is possible to conceive that God could engage, we are bound by the dictates of reason, to believe that all the infinite energies and resources of his Wisdom were brought into active requisition, in an enterprise of this magnitude and consequence.

WISDOM NEVER ACTS WITHOUT A DESIGN.

Motive or object is the distinguishing characteristic of intelligent action. A being possessing reason never enters into a deliberate and connected series of operations, without aiming at the accomplishment of a distinct object or end. The nature and character of his actions, depend entirely upon the nature and character of the end at which they are aimed. And all actions are wise or unwise, as they accomplish, or fail to accomplish, the especial object for which they were designed. No action, however wise it may seem, in itself considered, does in reality manifest wisdom, except in so far as it promotes the *end* it was designed to bring to pass.

The Creator, possessing as he does infinite intelligence, cannot be supposed to act, in any case, without designing to accomplish some specific and pre-determined *end*. Hence, in voluntarily and deliberately ushering the human family into existence, the end at which he aimed could not have been simply to create such a race, without any farther purpose in view, but must have been to create each individual for some distinct and clearly-defined condition—some fixed and certain state—some final and immutable destiny, into which, notwithstanding all the stages they may enter, or the changes through

which they may pass, he designed they should eventually come! To deny this, is to declare that God acts *without a purpose*!—to deny this, is effectually to deny, that he possesses Intelligence, Foresight, or Wisdom, and to destroy those perfections which form the foundation of all rational dependence on Jehovah, or confidence in him. That our position on this point is correct, is made evident by the emphatic language of the Deity himself: “I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the *end* from the *beginning*, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.”¹

GOD’S DESIGN IN THE CREATION OF MAN.

It being a point settled by reason and Scripture, that the Creator formed the human race, designing each member for some distinct and certain destiny, it becomes an interesting and important inquiry to ascertain the nature of that destiny. And here we need not be at any loss. A satisfactory solution to the inquiry before us is within the reach of every intelligent reader. It will be admitted as a correct principle of judging, that we can determine the nature of the design in any action, or series of actions, only by the moral character of the being who forms that design. Men do not hesitate to decide that the motives of a Washington, in assuming the reins of government over our Republic, were altogether different, in their moral nature, from those which actuated a Nero in ascending the imperial throne of Rome,

¹ Isaiah xlv. 9, 10.

because the characters of the two were directly the reverse of each other. The former was pure, high-minded, patriotic, virtuous and good, while the latter was selfish, depraved and cruel. From this difference in their moral character, we are satisfied there must have been a corresponding difference in their motives of action. It is upon the same principle that we must judge, if we judge at all, of the moral nature of Jehovah's design in creating the world.

GOD'S NATURE NOT EVIL.

If God were an evil being—if his nature was corrupt, cruel and fiendish—if his moral character was such as is ascribed to fabled demons, finding his chief delight in the torture and misery of sensitive creatures—if the Scriptures declared that “God is *hatred*,” and that “the Lord is *evil* unto all, and his *malicious cruelties* are over all his works”—then we should be compelled to believe that he formed the human race for an *evil* purpose, and that he deliberately designed, from the commencement, to make the whole, or at least a large part, miserable forever. This conclusion would be a reasonable and legitimate deduction from the premises, which none could gainsay. But such, by general consent it is admitted, is not the moral character of our heavenly Father. No; “God is Love.” The reign of an Almighty God, is a reign of Almighty Love!

“Love Almighty! Love Almighty! (sing,
Exult, creation!) Love Almighty reigns!
That death of death! that cordial of despair!
And loud eternity's triumphant song!”

However believers in the divine existence may differ on other points, here there is no question, no disagreement. All unite in acknowledging that God is infinitely, impartially, and immutably good—that there is no mixture, taint, or particle of evil in his nature—but that he is boundless in beneficence, justice, kindness, compassion and mercy—and that these characteristics pervade and compose his whole moral character. The correctness of these views is put beyond all cavil, by the clear and decided language of inspiration, which declares that he “is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.” Here, then, we all meet and agree.

Such being the character of the Deity, we are compelled, by the demands of reason, to believe that his design in ushering each human being into existence, was of a corresponding character—to do good to them, to bless them, to make them the objects of his love and compassion, and to bring them at last, as their ultimate and final state, into a condition of peace and bliss. To contend that he designed their final condition to be of an opposite character—one of endless wretchedness—is to confound all distinction between the motives of a God of Love, and a God of Evil—is to attribute precisely the same purposes to both, and to contend that the Supreme Father of spirits acts from no different and no better motives than the semi-omnipotent devil, in which so many formerly believed. Reason, logic, common sense, hedge up our way to such a conclusion. They utterly forbid our harboring it, and command, as we would be in subserviency to their

dictates, that we return to the deduction already affirmed, that in forming the human family, the design of "the God of Love," in reference to their ultimate condition, was that they should all participate in an endless happiness.

—— "Beholding in the sacred light
Of his essential reason all the shapes
Of swift contingency, all successive ties
Of action propagated through the sum
Of possible existence, He at once
Down the long series of eventful time
So fixed the dates of being, so disposed
To every living soul of every kind,
The field of motion and the hour of rest,
That all conspired to his supreme design,
To universal good!" — AKENSIDE.

CORROBORATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

Here, again, the Scriptures come in to support and perfect the conclusions of our reason. That the works in which the Wisdom of God engages, are works not to produce evil, but good, and good especially as an *ultimate end*, is evident from the nature of that Wisdom: "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."¹ Common sense teaches us that a Wisdom which is "pure and peaceable," cannot be engaged in originating designs to perpetuate impurity and sin forever. Neither can a Wisdom which is "full of *mercy* and *good fruits*" produce a plan, as its fruits, which has for its end

¹ James iii. 17.

and aim, the inflicting of ceaseless cruelties and tortures on intelligent and sensitive beings. But the Bible affords still clearer views of the particular state or condition into which the Creator, in forming the human race, designed them to enter. These will be seen in the following quotations: "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear, surely shall say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. To him shall men come, and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."¹ "All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord, and shall glorify thy name. For thou art great, and doest wondrous things. Thou art God alone."² "The Lord is not slack concerning his promises, as some men count slackness: but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."³ "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."⁴

MAN CREATED FOR A HAPPY DESTINY.

These scripture testimonies, plain, clear and distinct as they are, afford ample insight into the design of the Most High, in forming the world. However imperfect and sinful the race may be in

¹ Isa. xlv. 22—24. ² Ps. lxxxvi. 9, 10. ³ 2 Pet. iii. 9. ⁴ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

this existence, yet within the object for which they were formed; it will be seen above, there is embraced the design to bring them all into a condition of salvation, obedience and worship. Having created mankind for this purpose—a purpose which is in the most perfect harmony with the acknowledged character and attributes of the Deity—having determined that all the ends of the earth shall look to him and be saved, that every knee shall bow in obedience to him, and every tongue shall confess that in him they have righteousness and strength—that all nations shall come and worship before him and glorify his name—it was the office and work of God's Wisdom to originate a plan of operations in the divine councils, which should produce this most desirable and glorious result. And as that Wisdom is infinite in its capabilities and resources, we must believe it to have been fully equal to this task—abundantly able to mark out such plans of procedure, for the movements of Jehovah's providence, as should eventuate in bringing at last all the race of man into that perfectly holy and happy condition for which God, as we have seen, designed them from the beginning. Not only foreseeing, but predetermining the final state which his creatures should occupy, he must have been enabled by his Wisdom to foresee and predetermine each step, which was necessary to bring them into that state. In this gracious and worthy work, the Almighty is the great original Cause, and the final purity and bliss of the human family is the glorious Effect. And all-seeing Wisdom must have provided, and

distinctly seen, every individual link in the long and indissoluble chain, which unites the infinitely glorious Effect to its infinitely glorious Cause. To deny these conclusions, is to deny the existence of that foresight or foreknowledge, which is the first requisite to infinite Wisdom—it is, in fact, to deny that Wisdom is an attribute of Deity.

THE ORIGINAL PLAN COMPREHENSIVE AND PERFECT.

The mechanic, in manufacturing a set of machinery, first draws his plan—he marks down every shaft and lever, every crank and pulley—determines how the cogs of each wheel shall work with those of others—and enters into every possible detail and minutia, which is essential to the strength, beauty, and perfect operation of his mechanism. In fact, he sees in his mind's eye, the machine reared, completed in all respects, and in operation, before a blow is struck in the actual execution of his plans. Are we to suppose the great Architect of the Universe proceeds in his works with less of foresight, prudence and wisdom than man? The faculties of foresight and calculation, which our Maker bestows on his creatures, he must possess himself in infinite perfection; and it is evident that he abundantly exercises them in all the works in which he engages. That he brought these qualities into exercise in erecting the stupendous machinery of the heavens—in building the vast systems which roll in immensity of space—is demonstrated to all capacities, by the perfection in which

they have moved in their allotted spheres from the morning of time,—

“Forever singing, as they shine,
The Hand that made us is divine.”

It is not to be supposed the great Workman has been any less careful to exercise his foresight and calculation, in entering upon the most important enterprise of which man can conceive—the creation of the machinery of human existence. The plan, we must believe, was marked down with infinite precision—every line was drawn, every wheel, and cog, and pivot, assigned to its appropriate place—all obstacles, hindrances, or clogs, that could possibly interrupt the successful and perfect operation of this most invaluable set of mechanism, must have been distinctly foreseen and abundantly provided for in the original plan—and in the eye of Omniscience, the whole work was seen moving and accomplishing its design, with the utmost perfection, even before the edict went forth, “Let us make man.” To human comprehension, it is true, some of the wheels of this mechanism of God, may appear to operate unfavorably, and even in opposition to that condition of universal holiness and happiness, which was the especial object to be accomplished. But due reflection will lead the candid mind to the conclusion, that the difficulty in the premises exists entirely in man’s inability to comprehend the operation of this infinite mechanism, and to see the relation and connection between each individual movement and the grand operation of the whole, rather

than in any actual defect in the plans of divine Wisdom. It may appear inexplicable to those unlearned in mechanic arts, that two wheels moving in directly opposite courses in the same machinery, are both equally instrumental in producing the same result, in the operations of the machine as a whole. And yet such is the fact. Equally inexplicable and contradictory, in our feeble comprehension, may appear many of the movements in the plans of God to bring his creatures to the high pinnacle of heavenly perfection. It requires, however, but a moderate degree of confidence in the resources of infinite Wisdom, to believe that however adverse many operations in divine Providence may seem, whether in that which it actually does, or in that which it permits to be done, yet all but tend to roll on the great wheels of the original plan, to the glorious termination aimed at by the universal Father of spirits.*

WORKINGS OF PROVIDENCE MYSTERIOUS BUT SURE.

According to all human conceptions, at the time

* Let it not be supposed that in these remarks, we take ground on "the vexed question" of man's moral or free agency, or that they have any necessary connection with this agency. Allowing that mankind have been endowed with the utmost freedom that the most pertinacious advocate for "free agency" contends for, still it must be conceded that this freedom was granted by the Creator for some specific purpose belonging to his great plans, and having direct reference to the final condition into which he designed to bring his creatures. Hence, this "agency," let it be great or small, is but one of the numberless *wheels* in the machinery of human existence, which assists to bring about the final end for which our race was formed.

the transaction took place, the selling of Joseph into bondage by his brethren, was a great evil; and it was impossible for the heart-broken father Jacob, to reconcile the allowing of this lamentable occurrence, either with the Wisdom or Goodness of God. Yet the result proved that this very evil, apparently so in opposition to the happiness of the patriarch, was but one of the steps of divine Providence, to promote the welfare of all parties concerned. It was a wheel in the great machinery, (to keep up the figure,) which apparently turned in a *wrong* direction, but which, in the plans of heavenly Wisdom, turned *right* to produce the benevolent end aimed at. "And Joseph said unto them, * * * * * as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.¹" This transaction is but an epitome of the manner in which God overrules all human events. Although the Almighty has given his creatures the ability and the freedom of exercising their faculties according to their own will, within certain limits, and for which exercise, he holds them accountable to him—amenable to his rewards or punishments—yet in this, he does not deprive himself either of the ability, or the liberty, of turning all human actions to the forwarding of his own eternal purposes, conceived in boundless and impartial Goodness before the world began. And that infinite Wisdom is entirely competent to this work, there cannot be a question in any consistent mind.

¹ Gen. 1. 19, 20.

GOD'S DESIGNS ULTIMATELY ACCOMPLISHED.

With these considerations in view, can there be a rational doubt that the original designs of God respecting the human race, will be ultimately and completely accomplished? Having created humanity that he might bring them all finally into a condition of perfect holiness and bliss, is it consistent or reasonable to believe that a portion, or a single soul, will fall short of the attainment of this condition? To entertain a question on this point, is but to doubt whether the Wisdom of Jehovah is infinite. If he created the race of man, with the deliberate purpose of bringing them universally to the enjoyment of salvation, and any part fail of experiencing this blessing, then the Wisdom which drew the plans for the accomplishment of this purpose, must have been finite and imperfect. And moreover, in this case, God must be infinitely *disappointed*. No rational being will deliberately commence a work of importance, unless he actually *believes* he shall be able to accomplish it. A failure to complete it must necessarily bring disappointment. The only choice, therefore, which is left, on this whole subject, is to believe, either that God's Wisdom is imperfect, that his plans have failed, and he has become everlastingly disappointed, or that the entire human family will eventually participate in that state of perfection and happiness for which he originally designed them.

MAN'S PRESENT SINFULNESS NOT INSURMOUNTABLE.

It is in vain to throw in here, the objection of man's present sinfulness, in opposition to the perfect operations of God's plans—it is in vain to insist that if all had gone on in accordance with the original designs of the Creator, sin would never have existed. The whole weight of this objection is based upon the assumption that his Wisdom is imperfect, that his foresight was beclouded by ignorance, and that *disappointment* is written on his plans!—or, in other words, that at the head of the universe, there is a God unwise, short-sighted, erring, and altogether incapable of managing the affairs of his creation. In whatever mind the objection we are considering gains a foothold, its whole tendency is to destroy all rational confidence in the Deity, and to fill it with corroding doubts and apprehensions! The simple fact that man is here subject to sin, is of itself conclusive evidence that this subjection was not in opposition, but in accordance with, the original purposes of the Creator. The Scriptures plainly support this position. "For the creature *was made subject to vanity*, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God."¹ If the Creator *made* the creature subject to vanity or sin, as the apostle declares, then, so far from being in opposition, this condition

¹ Rom. viii. 20, 21.

of man must have been in agreement with his original holy and benevolent designs. And this is made perfectly manifest by an important fact asserted in the above passage, that this subjection of man to sinfulness, was made in especial connection with the gracious purpose of effecting his *deliverance* from this "bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." In confirmation of the same view of the subject, is the language of St. Paul in another portion of his epistle to the Romans. "For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."¹ In this passage, the apostle maintains that so far from being any indication of imperfection in the Wisdom of God, it is an evidence of the depth, the riches, the perfection of his Wisdom, that he could subject his creatures to sin in such a way—under the operation of such wise and gracious plans—that notwithstanding this subjection, he could still have mercy upon them all. And Paul was filled with amazement and admiration, at a Wisdom so unsearchable, so beyond our comprehension—a Wisdom which, amid man's blindness and unbelief, so pursues its bright track, as to bring all humanity within the embrace of infinite mercy!

¹ Rom. xi. 32, 33.

WHAT NECESSITY FOR A SAVIOUR?

It may here be inquired by an objector, if the plans of divine Wisdom will all be accomplished with unfailing certainty, what necessity was there of a Saviour? In reply, I would ask, if a plan is formed to erect an edifice, what need is there of a workman? It is not to be concealed that in the view of the popular religionists of the present day, the necessity which called for the mission of the Redeemer, was produced by a general *failure* of the original purposes and plans of God respecting man—a supposition which directly impugns the Wisdom and Power of the Most High. It is only necessary, however, for a consistent mind to contemplate, a single moment, the manifest absurdity of this idea—its entire incompatibility with every conception of Jehovah as a perfect being—to reject it as utterly unworthy those who believe in a God possessing infinite attributes.

GOD WORKS BY AGENTS.

In carrying his all-wise plans into execution, the Creator selects means, instruments, or agents; and he chooses such as will be best adapted to the nature of the work to be accomplished. It is in the light of this truth, that we must view the work of the Saviour. Christ came into the world, not to correct any mistakes of divine Wisdom—not to remedy any oversight, error, or failure in the original

plans of his Father—but simply *to carry those plans into execution!* Jesus is the great Agent, to whom, according to his primary purpose, God entrusts the carrying into effect his gracious purposes for the salvation of the world. In conformity with this view, Christ is denominated the “Mediator between God and men”¹—the medium through which Jehovah works out his designs in respect to his creatures. Hence, St. Paul declares, that in the Redeemer “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”² Hence also he is called “the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God.” It is in reference to this view of the subject, that Jesus exclaims—“I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”³ And in farther manifestation of the same truth, Christ declared, “God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”⁴ To preserve consistency, therefore, as believers in a God of perfect Wisdom, it is incumbent to look upon the advent, mission, and reign of Christ, not as the fruit of any previous *frustration* of the purposes of the Creator, but as an evidence and pledge of the happy *consummation* of every design he has formed in regard to his earthly offspring!

THE ARGUMENT RESTED.

Here we rest the argument on this Attribute. The premises being established clearly, not only by the united voices of Scripture and reason, but by an

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 5. ² Col. ii. 3. ³ 1 Cor. i. 24. ⁴ John vi. 38. ⁵ John iii. 17.

almost universal consent of believers in the divine existence, that the Wisdom of the Creator is infinite, and that under the promptings of his impartial love, he formed the human race with a deliberate purpose to have their existence result in the endless blessedness of all, the conclusion that all will eventually participate in this blessedness, is clear, distinct, and unavoidable; and no skill or sophistry can avoid it. Reason must become foolishness, and the whole current of rational logic must be reversed, before the premises and the conclusion at which we have arrived, can be dissevered from each other. And the great truth to which this course of reasoning leads, reveals the highest possible glory of God in securing the holiness and bliss of his intelligent creation, and accords not only with the reason of man, but with the purest and holiest desires that can be entertained in the heart of a Christian. What more solid and secure basis can be required for belief?

"Here then we rest. The Universal Cause
Acts to *one end*, but acts by various laws."

ARGUMENT III.

THE POWER OF GOD.

"Thou hast built,
With means that were not, till by thee employed,
Worlds that had never been, hadst thou in Strength
Been less, or less Benevolent than Strong.
They are thy witnesses, who speak thy Power
And Goodness infinite."

EFFECT OF LOSING SIGHT OF THE POWER OF GOD.

IN meditating upon the Attributes of the Deity, it is vitally important that his Power be not overlooked. It is one of the primary and essential perfections of the Most High; and a misunderstanding of its capability, or of its office in the providence of God, is fatal to those right conceptions of the Creator, which are necessary to give peace and resignation to the believer. In losing sight, or in underrating the Power of Jehovah, the efficacy and usefulness of all his other attributes are destroyed. Of what avail to believe that he is infinite in Goodness and boundless and impartial in his Love, or that he is actuated by the most kind and benevolent regard for his creatures; of what avail to believe that his Wisdom is infinitely capable of originating and arranging plans perfectly adapted to carry out into successful execution, all the holy promptings of his love for his earthly offspring—of what avail, these just con-

ceptions, if connected with them is the belief that he is deficient in the Power, whether physical or moral, of executing the promptings of his Goodness, or of carrying his wise plans into a practical consummation? A ruler may enact the most wise and wholesome laws for the regulation of his kingdom, and be animated with a desire to do for his subjects the utmost good their circumstances can require at his hands; yet, if he is deficient in the requisite power to execute his laws, and accomplish his desires, all his wise and good intentions will be of no avail. So far as any real and practical benefit to his subjects is concerned, his wise laws might as well have not been enacted, and his benevolent intentions have not been cherished. A similar conclusion will apply to the Supreme Being. So far as man's interest and happiness are involved, he might as well have been a God of Evil as of Love, if he possesses no ability to accomplish the promptings of that Love; he might as well have been a God of Foolishness as of Wisdom, if he has no Power to carry into execution the plans which his Wisdom has devised.

GOD'S POWER CO-EXTENSIVE WITH HIS WISDOM.

We have seen, in previous Arguments, that the Goodness of the Creator is impartial and immutable, and that his Wisdom is infinite and unerring. Is his Power co-extensive with his Goodness and Wisdom? In other words, does he possess sufficient ability successfully to execute the purposes and

plans his Goodness has prompted and his Wisdom has arranged for the final salvation and reconciliation of all mankind? This is a vital inquiry, and one that affects materially the very foundation of human hope.

“Hope is earth’s most estimable prize.”

“Hope thou in God,”¹ exclaims the Psalmist. St. Paul prays, “Now, the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”² And the same Apostle speaks of fleeing to the hope of the gospel, and laying hold upon it, as a “refuge”—and declares this hope is “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.”³ But how can a man comply with the requisition of the Psalmist, or experience the benefits of that hope in God which is described by St. Paul, who distrusts the Creator’s ability to accomplish his purposes?—who doubts whether he really has Power to fulfil all his promises, and complete all his plans? Such a doubt, such a distrust, most clearly undermines all consistent hope in the human soul, and sets it afloat on a boundless and troubled sea of uncertainty.

PRACTICAL DENIAL OF THE ATTRIBUTES.

It is not unfrequently the case, that people will acknowledge the existence of the attributes of God, *theoretically*, but at the same time, *practically* deny them. Thus while it is an admitted point in every

¹ Ps. xlii. 5.

² Rom. xv. 13.

³ Heb. vi. 18, 19.

system of theology among Christian sects, that Jehovah is omnipotent in Power, there are not a few who, in the practical application of this Power to the purposes of God, view it as weak, inefficient and imperfect. So that although the Love of the Creator yearns over the whole of humanity, with an infinite desire to bless them all with boundless felicity—and although *his infinite Wisdom* has enabled him to form plans in all things fully adapted to the complete accomplishment of this holy desire—yet he must be forever disappointed and ungratified in this respect, in consequence of a lack of *ability* to carry these plans into perfect execution! This is the great defect in the popular systems of the present day. Theory and practice—which is but cause and effect—are, according to these systems, disconnected in the character of God—and while he is *omnipotent* in Power, is *not able* to fulfil his purposes. A most marked and startling contradiction in terms! To remedy this defect, it is only necessary for the mind to understand that Jehovah's Power is not only omnipotent in *name*, but is omnipotent in *practice*.

THE SCRIPTURES ASSERT GOD'S POWER.

The Scriptures emphatically declare that Power is one of the attributes of the Deity. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power and the glory. * * * Thou reignest over all: and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all."¹ "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this, that power

¹ 1 Chron. xxix. 11, 12.

belongeth unto God."¹ That this Power is omnipotent and irresistible, is made equally clear by the inspired word. "Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."² "I am the Almighty God."³ "And God said unto him, I am God Almighty."⁴ The word Almighty, applied to an infinite being, must necessarily receive its fullest extent of meaning. It is synonymous with Omnipotent, and signifies *unlimited* power. The Scriptures, moreover, abound with passages descriptive of the practical application of this Power by Jehovah, both in nature and in providence. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? * * * Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."⁵ "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back."⁶ "God hath power to help and to cast down."⁷ "He divideth the sea with his power, and by his understanding he smiteth through the proud."⁸

ALL CREATED THINGS ATTEST THE POWER OF GOD.

"How sweet to muse upon His skill display'd,
(Infinite skill!) in all that he has made;
To trace in Nature's most minute design,
The signature and stamp of Power Divine."

When we again turn our contemplation to the works of Nature for evidence corroborative of the

¹ Ps. lxi. 11. ² Rev. xix. 6. ³ Gen. xvii. 1. ⁴ Gen. xxxv. 11.
⁵ Isa. xl. 12—15. ⁶ Isa. xiv. 27. ⁷ 2 Chron. xxv. 8. ⁸ Job xxvi. 12.

words of Inspiration, the same indications can be discovered of the Power of God, as of his Goodness and Wisdom. And Nature is a book that all can read, and one that never errs in its instructive lessons. "As the sea reflects the rays of the sun, so do the works of Nature reflect the character of God." We are filled with surprise and astonishment at the power exerted in erecting the obelisks and pyramids of Egypt—those structures which have withstood the storms and convulsions of thousands of years. But how utterly this power sinks into weakness and nothingness, when compared with that displayed by God, in creating this earth. And when we look to the heavens, and behold the countless globes floating in the fields of ether, in comparison with many of which, our world is but as a pebble, and endeavor to realize that not only within the circle of man's vision, but throughout limitless space, there is reason to believe, similar ponderous bodies exist in endless profusion, rolling on gloriously and forever in their vast circles, and fulfilling the mission for which they were designed; the human mind is overwhelmed with the immensity of Power which must have been requisite to usher them into existence! What hand but that of Omnipotence could have moulded in its palm those mighty globes, as the potter shapes his vessel? What arm but that of Omnipotence could have launched them forth into the ocean of limitless space, with an impetus which, experiencing no diminution, urges them on their rapid flight forever? What power but Omnipotence could have reared

and sustained the adamantine pillars of the universe—could have arranged the heavenly bodies in their proper spheres—guided and controlled them in their distinct orbits, and with unerring precision, caused world to revolve around world, and system within system, in an all-perfect and eternal harmony?

“With what an awful world-revolving power
 Were first th’ unwieldy planets launched along
 Th’ illimitable void! Thus to remain,
 Amid the flux of many thousand years,
 That oft has swept the toiling race of men
 And all their labored monuments away,
 Firm, unremitting, matchless in their course;
 To the kind-tempered change of night and day,
 And of the seasons ever stealing round,
 Minutely faithful.”

Nature’s superstructure in every part—earth, seas and skies, sun, moon and stars—the ponderous and the minute, the suns that blaze in the heavens, the atoms that compose a grain of sand—the hoarse voice of the thunderbolt, the murmurings of the zephyr—the flash of the rapid lightning, the scintillation of the glow-worm—bespeak the infinite energies and capabilities of the creating Jehovah! Upon all things in existence, is enstamped, in living characters of light, Omnipotence! Omnipotence!!*

“Lord, when my thoughtful soul surveys
 Fire, air, and earth, and stars and seas,

* “On the dial of the cathedral at Bruges, the sun is represented directing the hours, with this motto, *Non rego, nisi, regar*: signifying that the sun could not rule the day, if it was not first ruled itself.”

I call them all thy slaves;
Commissioned by my Father's will,
Poison shall cure, or balm shall kill;
Vernal suns or zephyr's breath
May burn or blast the plants to death,
That sharp December saves.
What can winds or planets boast
But a precarious power?
The sun is all in darkness lost,
Frost shall be fire, and fire be frost,
When he appoints the hour."

THE POWER OF GOD APPLIED TO HIS PLANS.

The existence of Omnipotent Power, as another of the great fundamental attributes of Deity, being thus indubitably established by the combined testimony of Scripture and Nature, it becomes indispensably necessary, as we would have a truthful and consistent system of religion, to keep it with all its measureless energies, constantly in view. Man can confide in this attribute—can depend upon it—can reasonably believe that it is as infinitely capable of *executing*, as Goodness is of prompting, and Wisdom of planning, all the works of the providence of God!

It has been shown in former Arguments that the human race were ushered into existence under the prompting of the attribute of infinite Goodness, and that the object aimed at by the Creator, could have been nothing less than the final and eternal felicity of every child of humanity—that Goodness would forever have forbidden the creation of intelligent and sensitive beings, for any other purpose than

such as accords with its own benevolent promptings. It has also been shown that, being infinite in Wisdom and omniscient in Knowledge—as clearly beholding the *end* as the *beginning*—the Deity was enabled to form infinitely comprehensive, efficient and all-perfect plans for the successful accomplishment of his holy purpose in creation—plans arranged in full foresight of every possible obstacle or difficulty that could interfere with their operation—plans that took into consideration man's passions, tastes, inclinations, habits, mental and moral capabilities, and every conceivable *abuse* of his endowments, and the *unhappy* consequences of such abuse, as well as their natural use and the accruing benefits—plans adapted to man in every stage of existence, not only as an ignorant, erring, sinful being, but as one *capable* of reformation, improvement, and unmeasured advancement in holiness, knowledge and happiness. And now, having furthermore seen that Jehovah is clothed with omnipotent Power, fully commensurate with his other attributes, have we not the most sound and legitimate reasons for the belief, that his Almighty energy will be brought into an adequate exercise, in the accomplishment of his wise and worthy plans, and universal humanity, the offspring of God, be brought eventually into the full enjoyment of that perfect state of felicity, for which they were originally designed? Who, in the clear exercise of reason, can have a doubt on this point? Who, with a just conception of the nature of the Divine Attributes—their influence in the councils of the Most High—their inexhaustible

resources, and infinite energies—can have a doubt on this point? With the premises before us, distinctly understood, are not all doubts as to this glorious and happy result of creation, clearly in violation of man's enlightened judgment, and a plain contradiction of the first principles of logic and common sense?

UNIVERSAL SALVATION ACCORDS WITH PUREST DESIRES
OF PUREST HEARTS.

If the conclusion at which we have arrived by a direct and clear course of deduction, according to the teachings of reason, was in opposition to the holy and benevolent desires of the sanctified and christian heart, or in violation of the inspired word of God, there would be apology for doubt. But such is not the case. It is a truth which will be attested unanimously, by persons of every sect, who have been born of the spirit of Christ, that nothing can be more in accordance with every pure and heavenly desire of the Christian's heart, than the prospect of the ultimate repentance and reformation of every sinner—the yielding up of all hearts to the holy influences of the divine spirit—the willing subjection of all souls to the blessed reign of Christ—the deliverance of all men from sin, and evil, and death—and the final gathering of the Universal Family around the Throne of the Common Father, united in everlasting bonds of love and peace! And is it possible that the Scriptures contradict a consummation which the heart so ardently desires,

and the truth of which reason declares so emphatically? If such were the fact, then would there be a direct collision in the works of the Most High—then would the word of God in revelation, contradict the voice of God as it speaks through the pure heart and the clear mind of man! But it is not so. While there is not in the Bible a passage which by a fair, enlightened construction, according to the laws of language, and the rules of interpretation, can be made to contradict in the slightest degree, the final salvation of all men, there are numerous declarations which affirm this doctrine in a manner as distinct and unequivocal as the capability of human language can allow. From the abundance of this scripture testimony, the following must, in this place, suffice—"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"¹ "We have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."² God "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth."³ Here, then, is the union of God's word, and man's heart and reason,—all coöperating and combining to proclaim a consummation calculated to give the highest joy to men and angels!

AN OBJECTION ANTICIPATED—MAN'S FREEDOM.

But let us anticipate an objection. The *freedom* which God has given his creatures the power to ex-

¹ John i. 29.

² 1 John iv. 14.

³ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

ercise, is supposed to be destructive to the desirable conclusions at which we have above arrived. It is contended that man has been left free to obey or disobey the law of God, according to the volition of his own mind—that the reward of obedience, and the punishment of disobedience, have been placed clearly and distinctly before him—and that multitudes, in the exercise of this liberty, do disobey and incur the penalty of unending wretchedness—which doom is to be attributed, not to their Creator, but to their own wickedness, inasmuch as they could have escaped it, had they complied with the terms of salvation. Allowing these positions to be true, as we do, with a single exception, and yet it is self-evident that they do not militate in the slightest degree, against the ultimate salvation of all men. Could it be shown that man, in the exercise of moral freedom, will *forever* violate the laws of Jehovah—will forever go on in sin—then it is acknowledged, he will *forever* receive the inflictions of just punishment. For it will be right for God to chastise his creatures so long as they refuse to yield obedience to his righteous government. But this position is altogether untenable. It is contradicted alike by experience, reason and scripture. The most sinful among men *have been reformed*, without violating their moral freedom. If *one* sinner can thus be reformed, then it is a logical deduction, that *all* sinners *can* be thus reformed. And it is an assertion susceptible of the clearest demonstration, that in the providence of a God of *infinite* capabilities, whatever good and desirable work *may* or *can* be done,

will be done! Moreover the great and sole object of Christ's mediatorial reign, was to bring to pass the good and desirable work of the reformation, not of a part only, but of all mankind—or in other words, to save *the world*, and reconcile to God all the unreconciled and sinful: "We have seen, and do *testify*, that the Father sent the Son, to be *the Saviour of the world*."¹ "For it pleased the Father that in him [Christ] should all fulness dwell: and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."² "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."³ That the Saviour in "the dispensation of the fulness of times," either in the present or future world, will succeed in bringing all sinners to repentance, is made absolutely certain by the word of God: "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."⁴ "And when *all things shall be subdued unto him*, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all."⁵ When that time shall come,

¹ 1 John iv. 14.² Colos. i. 19, 20.³ 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.⁴ Phil. ii. 9-11.⁵ 1 Cor. xv. 28.

here undisputably foretold by inspiration, that God shall become ALL *in* ALL, then necessarily, there can be no *sin* in a single child of humanity. When a God of holiness and love, is not only *in all* beings, but is *all* within them, i. e., pervades their souls wholly and completely, to the exclusion of all opposing principles, which is the undoubted meaning of St. Paul's plain and emphatic language, what shadow of an argument can be raised that iniquity can then be found in a single member of the human race? The conclusion, therefore, is obvious, that although man is made morally free, and will continue so forever, and although in the exercise of this freedom, under the influence of ignorance, blindness and fleshly passions, he may violate the law of God, and experience its penalties for a season, yet so far from continuing *voluntarily* to sin and to feel its consequent sting forever, the argument is irresistible, that all will finally turn from wickedness, and seek and serve the living God. The woes which sin unavoidably brings upon the guilty, must necessarily prompt them, in due time, to exercise their freedom and refrain from iniquity, that they may thus escape its fearful consequences. The only objection that can possibly be brought against this conclusion, must be that God will interfere with the exercise of man's freedom, or deprive him entirely of it, and thus deny him the *privilege* of forsaking sin, and *compel* him to remain in a state of hardness and iniquity forever! But this objection so violates all conceptions of the Creator's character—is so in opposition to his holiness and justice—that its fallacy

must be self-evident. Would it be *right* for God to *prevent* the sinner from reforming?—would it be *just*? Why should a being of impartial Goodness, who seeks the welfare of his creatures, and who, the Scriptures declare, is desirous that “all should come to repentance,” interfere when the sinner would repent, and raise obstacles to prevent it? Does the Bible represent God as acting in this contradictory manner? It does not.

THE PENALTY OF ENDLESS PUNISHMENT NOT ATTACHED
TO GOD'S LAW.

In stating the objection to the doctrine of a world's salvation, which is founded on man's moral freedom, an exception was made to a single point. It is this, viz., that the *penalty* inflicted by the Ruler of the world, for a violation of his law, is a state of punishment without end. In no part of the Bible, is such a punishment declared to be the penalty of God's law. Let the reader search for himself, and he will become satisfied of the correctness of this assertion. And the decision of the Scriptures is amply supported by the deductions of reason. The proportion between the greatest amount of guilt that the most blind and hardened of erring humanity can incur in this life, and an eternity of woe, is so infinitely unequal and dissimilar, and so directly in violation of all conceptions of justice and equity, that the unbiassed mind rejects it as utterly absurd and monstrous. Moreover, if God had affixed such a penalty to his law, it would have defeated his own

designs. Creating mankind under the prompting of infinite Goodness, his purpose must have been, as already shown, to bring each being thus formed into a final state of holiness and bliss. But who does not perceive that foreseeing as he did, that man would be a sinner, and transgress his commandments, to have annexed endless punishment as the penalty for the violation of his law, would have entirely disarranged and overthrown this most holy and benevolent original design? The all-perfect God cannot be considered as proceeding in this blind and contradictory manner. Human beings, in their ignorance, may "cross their own track;" but not so with the omniscient Deity. Whatever course he may pursue in moving on the wheels of his perfect providence, we may be positive he takes no step which will, in the slightest degree, infringe upon his original designs towards man, conceived in boundless purity, goodness and wisdom.

The position we have taken, that God attached no penalty to his law, which overthrew his design to bless and save the world, is fully confirmed by St. Paul: "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect."¹ The promises to which the Apostle refers, were those made by Jehovah unto Abraham

¹ Gal. iii. 16, 17.

and repeated unto Isaac and Jacob, and which he describes in the same chapter to be as follows: "And the Scriptures, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."¹ The Apostle here maintains that no law or penalty can overthrow the *original* design revealed by God in his promise to Abraham, to bless in Christ, all the kindreds and families of the earth. The conclusion to which he thus carries us is obvious and positive.

PREVAILING VIEWS OF MAN'S FREEDOM INCONSISTENT.

The objection we are considering, based upon man's acknowledged agency or freedom, is very peculiar in its character. If it were but allowed that mankind are not only endowed with freedom in this life, but that they will possess the same freedom in the world to come, and forever, which is dictated by common sense, and demanded by every principle of mental and moral philosophy, then the Creator would be represented as acting consistently, and this freedom would present no obstacle to the accomplishment of God's holy design and desire to bring all his creatures to holiness and bliss. Because it is clearly self-evident that every intelligent being would, in time, become convinced that sin was his worst foe, and the cause of all his wretchedness; and being free to act, would voluntarily turn away from its practice, and seek after that righteousness

¹ Gal. iii. 8. See also, Gen. xii. 3; xxvi. 4; xxviii. 14.

and purity which are the unfailing fountains of happiness. But the exercise of this freedom *hereafter*, is singularly not allowed, by those who are the most pertinacious advocates of its existence *here*. It is strangely contended that God permits his creatures the exercise of freedom in this life *only*—just sufficiently long to enable them to violate his law, and incur its supposed eternal penalties, and then he removes them from the world—deprives them of all their freedom, or, in other words, makes them *slaves*—and *compels* them by the exercise of his omnipotent Power, whether they would or not, to continue in bondage to sin and its woes forever!¹

The reader can but acknowledge that these, to say the least, are singular views of human freedom, and of the consistency and wisdom of the Creator's providence. Such views, however, are not only inconsistent, but are evidently in violation of all the teachings of mental philosophy. If man is endowed with freedom of action, it is a constituent and elementary principle or ingredient of his mental nature. Hence, to deprive him of it, would be to dismember and destroy his nature as *man*, and make him a nondescript—a being without conscience, and without accountability. In fine, *the man*—the intelligent, moral being—would be as effectually stricken out of existence, and annihilated, as though deprived entirely of consciousness—and there would be left only a bundle of sensations, suffering as uncon-

¹ Thus God is represented a great *slave-owner*, and we might add, in accordance with human creeds, the *devil* is made his "*slave-driver*," forever!

sciously as the carcass of an animal twinges with spasmodic convulsions, after life has departed. There is no conclusion more obvious than that if man is now endowed with freedom, he will forever possess it, so long as he continues in conscious being—will forever have the *power*, the *liberty*, the *right*, of choosing good or evil, and experiencing the consequences of his choice. So long as he prefers evil, he must suffer evil; but whenever he is disposed to forsake evil and follow good, that he may reap the fruits of good, he will possess the right, power, and opportunity of doing so, in the future as well as the present world.

MAN'S AGENCY FRUSTRATING THE PLANS OF GOD.

The view of man's agency or freedom now generally entertained, places the Creator in a most strange light. It represents him who has brought the human race into existence for the purpose of making them all his obedient children, and the recipients of boundless holiness and bliss, as immediately endowing them with a power, by which they are at once capable of entirely thwarting and overthrowing his plans. Thus he is presented as deliberately and knowingly "crossing his own path"—hedging up his own way—and voluntarily placing insurmountable obstacles to the accomplishment of his purposes, and the gratification of his most holy desires! This theory holds up to our view a God who is *desirous* of saving all mankind, but is not *able*. And why? Because he has given his creatures more power than he has retained to himself

—has given *them* power to withstand all *his* power—and thus while he is striving to save all the world, most of the world resist successfully his efforts, by the exercise of a power or freedom, which he knowingly himself bestowed upon them! Can an intelligent reader bring himself to adopt these conclusions as consistent and reasonable?—And do not those who take such views of the movements of the Creator's providence, virtually class themselves with those mentioned by the prophet?—"They have no knowledge that * * * * * pray unto a god that *cannot save*." ¹

COMMON VIEW OF AGENCY VIOLATES THE SCRIPTURES.

The common understanding of man's freedom or "free agency," not only is in evident violation of the first principles of reason, but also in conflict with many of the most pointed and pungent portions of the Bible. The Deity makes the following declaration and inquiry: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?" ² This question is evidently asked in reference to what Jehovah can do for "all flesh." How would the advocates of man's agency, as above noticed, answer this inquiry? To be consistent with their theory, they would be compelled to say—"Yes, Lord God of all flesh, the salvation of all the intelligent creatures whom thou hast formed, is a work altogether too hard for thee! Thou canst not accomplish it, for thou hast given unto men an

¹ Isa. xlv. 20.

² Jer. xxxii. 27.

agency by which they can resist thy power—withstand all thy influences—disarrange and destroy all thy holy and benevolent plans of salvation—and rush recklessly into hell—notwithstanding all thy efforts to raise them to heaven!!” What a reply to return to the all-perfect God! Not only does it violate the meaning and spirit of the question in the above passage of Scripture, but it flatly contradicts another declaration of God’s word in the same chapter—“Ah, Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and *there is nothing too hard for thee.* * * * * * The Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name: great in counsel, and mighty in work.”¹ The salvation of the entire human race, is acknowledgedly both a physical and moral possibility. If it is possible to save one of a race, then it is within the range of possibility to save all. Hence the redemption and reconciliation of a world of sinners is legitimately and necessarily included within the above declaration, that there is nothing too hard for God. And the position that Universal Salvation is too hard a work for Deity, through any cause whatever, must be groundless and false, or God’s word untrue!

THE SAVIOUR’S INQUIRY APPLIED TO THE SUBJECT.

On a certain occasion the Saviour made the following very reasonable and pointed inquiry: “Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth

¹ Jer. xxxii. 17-19.

not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, this man began to build, and was not able to finish."¹

The principle involved in this passage is, that a man who should commence erecting an edifice, without first ascertaining whether he was able to complete it, would be deficient in foresight, discretion and wisdom. And yet is not this precisely the light in which the Creator is represented by the advocates of a limited salvation? Under the promptings of infinite Goodness, he commenced the work of forming a race of human beings, who should eventually become perfect, holy, and happy as the angels in heaven. But unfortunately, in putting this most worthy plan into execution, he meets with a signal failure, and so far from bringing them into this state of perfection and bliss, countless millions sink into endless sin and woe. If this is a true representation of the result of God's work of creation, is it not an unavoidable conclusion that Jehovah did not first *count the cost*—did not first ascertain whether he was able to complete his work—but commenced with the same blindness and recklessness of the result, as the man who should begin to build a tower without first learning whether he could complete it. Who is prepared to charge this glaring imbecility on the infinite God? If it is a mark of prudence and wisdom in man not to commence a work without look-

¹ Luke xiv. 28—30.

ing into his means, and ascertaining whether he has resources sufficient to finish it, can we do less than ascribe an equal amount of discretion and foresight to the great Jehovah? And if he possesses these qualities only in the same degree as a wise man, (without adverting to the acknowledged fact, that he possesses every attribute of foresight, discretion, wisdom, and all similar qualities, in infinite perfection,) it is an obvious conclusion, that he would not begin a work so important in its nature and lasting in its consequences, as the creation of a race of sentient and rational beings, without clearly foreseeing and satisfying himself, that he should be able to complete it according to the original design. That the Deity acknowledgedly *did* commence the work of human creation, in full possession of the attributes of wisdom and foresight, and under the influence of infinite love, is conclusive evidence that he *believed* and *saw*, that all men would finally enter upon infinite purity and bliss!

THE EFFECT OF MAN'S AGENCY FORESEEN BY GOD.

The argument which is attempted to be raised against the reign of universal peace and love, on man's freedom of action, is thus seen to be groundless in every point in which it can be viewed. When God endowed his creatures with free agency, or moral agency, he must have foreseen the operation, influence, and result which the exercise of this power would produce in the case of every human being. To contend that he foresaw it would prove an insurmountable obstacle to the fulfilment

of his purposes of love in creation—to contend that he foreknew his creatures would use this power to their endless ruin and wretchedness, as he must, if such will actually be the result—is to contend that he deliberately purposed evil, and coolly determined to give his creatures an instrument of self-destruction. This is a self-contradiction, inasmuch as infinite love can never produce, or consent to, infinite evil. If we appeal to the dictates of the heart, or the decisions of the mind, they will assure us, that if men could not be endowed with freedom of action, without its endangering the everlasting happiness of the soul, it would have been better, infinitely better, to have deprived them of this power, or have allowed them to sleep in the harmless embrace of annihilation. But to suppose a being of infinite Goodness and Wisdom would engraft upon the nature of his offspring, without their consent or knowledge, an endowment which, in countless millions of cases, he clearly saw would lead to their ceaseless wretchedness, is a violation of every dictate of reason and consistency. To give a shade of the coloring of propriety to this position, it must first be proved that Deity possesses neither Goodness nor Wisdom! Looking at the character and attributes of God, as universally acknowledged, it becomes evident that in endowing his creatures with moral freedom, so far from foreseeing it would prove the destruction of any, he clearly perceived it would promote the welfare of all—that it would lead them all up to higher stages of moral and spiritual perfection than could be attained in any other manner—

and would prove a most efficient and successful instrument in the final accomplishment of his purpose to elevate the human race to boundless purity and happiness.

GOD OMNIPOTENT IN MORAL POWER, AS WELL AS IN
PHYSICAL.

Another objection to the argument in favor of Universal Reconciliation, based on the omnipotence of God's Power, may demand a passing notice. It is this—"That although Jehovah is omnipotent in Power, yet an argument cannot consistently be drawn from this fact, in support of the salvation of all, inasmuch as it is not reasonable to suppose he will exert *physical* power, and *force* his creatures to heaven, whether they consent or not." To all this we willingly assent, and yet our theory is not invalidated in the remotest degree. God is no more omnipotent in *physical* power, than in his *moral* and *spiritual* power. His resources to carry on his works, accomplish his will, and complete his designs, in his spiritual creation, are as boundless and as infinitely efficient, as in his physical creation. He is capable of governing and guiding the movements of the physical world—of causing every law of nature to operate, through all time, with the utmost perfection, producing the results designed in the original plans—and of influencing all the wheels of the great machinery of the universe, to move on forever, "without variableness or the shadow of turning." Equally capable is he of governing and guiding all things in the spiritual universe—of hav-

ing all its principles and properties developed in infinite activity—all its laws and influences fully obeyed—and bringing to perfect maturity all the fruits which these laws, principles, and properties, are capable of producing. It is true we are not acquainted with all the laws and properties in the spiritual world, nor do we at present comprehend all the movements of those laws and properties, with which we are partially acquainted. And indeed the same is our condition respecting the physical world. Numerous laws are in existence and in operation, which we cannot comprehend. Yet the perfection in which those laws of nature operate which we do understand, affords the most abundant assurance of the perfect operation of those which outreach our comprehension and knowledge. As it is self-evident Jehovah has physical resources at his command which exceed our present knowledge, and far transcend every possible human conception, so it is equally evident he has moral or spiritual resources at his disposal, which are infinitely beyond the most expanded idea that the soul of man is now capable of entertaining. In this world man has no opportunity to behold all the displays of either the physical or moral power of the Creator. Hence it is unreasonable to pretend to judge of his resources in either respect, by those limited manifestations, which come within the cognizance of our feeble senses in the present existence. To suppose we can measure the spiritual capabilities of Deity by the displays we can witness in this life, is as inconsistent and illogical, as to imagine that

whence the Redeemer draws all his resources, there is the same infinite fulness, the same omnipotence in spiritual energy and ability, as is everywhere manifested in the physical creation. That the power of Jesus is derived from the Father, is manifest not only from the express declarations of Christ, but from the additional fact, that when Jesus shall have completely accomplished the object of his reign—when he shall have brought all souls into a willing and happy subjection to his peaceful government—then he is to deliver up the kingdom into the hands of God—he himself is to become subject to the Father, in precisely the same manner that all men have become subject to him, and God shall become “*all in ALL!*”¹ And that this most desirable and holy work of the restoration and reconciliation of all intelligences to their heavenly Father, shall be accomplished without spiritual or physical coercion, but by the voluntary action of the creature's will, is made certain by the declaration of the Psalmist—“Thy people shall be *willing* in the day of thy *power*.”²

COMBINATION OF THE THREE FUNDAMENTAL ATTRIBUTES.

The argument drawn from a consideration of the three fundamental attributes of the Deity, in support of the ultimate salvation of all men, is susceptible of a brief and pointed summing up. It is impossible to sustain the position that the creation of God will

¹ See 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

² Ps. cx. 3.

result in the endless perpetuity of sin and suffering, through any cause whatever, without a direct and broad impeachment and contradiction of one of the three attributes of Goodness, Wisdom or Power. To deny that he made *all* his intelligent creatures with an express design and determination to bestow upon them eventually, an inheritance of immortal purity and felicity, is most effectually to deny that he possesses infinite, impartial and endless *Goodness*. If, however, it is acknowledged that he did thus make all for happiness, but at the same time it is insisted that he was not equal to the forming of plans, or the devising ways and means, by which this worthy and blessed purpose could be accomplished, then the infinite perfection of his *Wisdom* is manifestly impeached and denied. Or if, lastly, it is contended he created all for the bliss of heaven, and originated and arranged plans perfectly competent to the accomplishment of this godlike purpose, but that he cannot carry these plans into a successful execution, then the omnipotence of his Power is impugned and destroyed. Hence the doctrine of ceaseless misery is in violent and irreconcilable conflict with each of these attributes *separately*, and if possible, still more in conflict with their *combined* force and evidence! It has not, therefore, the slightest fragment to rest upon, under the clear light of that reason, which is the emanation of God within us.

THE ARGUMENT IRRESISTIBLE.

But how infinitely different is the opposite argument, all luminous as it is with the undivided

assent of every particle of intelligence in the human mind. It has already been seen, that each of these attributes of Jehovah, when considered separately, throws its whole weight, power and influence, into the support of the final result of God's creation in universal harmony, holiness and happiness. But when these attributes conjoin their testimony—when their combined power is thrown into the scale—when their voices utter their own natural tones, by which alone they can unite in sweet and thrilling harmony—they form an argument in behalf of the eventual salvation of all lapsed humanity, which is absolutely irrefutable and irresistible! The attributes of Jehovah cannot violate their own nature, and neither, being infinite, can they manifest the slightest imperfection in their operations. Infinite Goodness could prompt only a state of impartial, boundless and immutable bliss, as the final condition of all intelligences to whose creation it assented. Infinite Wisdom originated every plan, adopted every measure, and pointed out every means necessary to overcome all possible obstacles, and gratify in immeasurable fulness the prompting of Goodness. Infinite Power is abundantly and perfectly able to execute, in the most minute exactness, all the plans of Wisdom and all the desires of Goodness! Here our feet are fixed on an immovable foundation for belief in the heaven-born doctrine of Universal Salvation—a foundation formed by the undivided testimony of Reason, and corroborated in every particular by the voice of Inspiration. It is confidently believed no art, no cunning, no wisdom, no subtlety

of reasoning, no power of logic, possessed by man, can invalidate or weaken, in the slightest possible degree, this foundation, or remove it from those whose hopes are based upon it.

"The Lord of all, himself through all diffused,
Sustains, and is the life of all that lives.

* * * * *

* * * He feeds the sacred fire

By which the mighty process is maintained ;

Who sleeps not, is not weary ; in whose sight

Slow circling ages are as transient days ;

Whose work is without labor ; whose designs

No flaw deforms, no difficulty thwarts ;

And whose Beneficence no change exhausts."

The conclusion at which we have thus been enabled to arrive, is alike joyful and enrapturing to the hearts of all pure and good beings, and honorable and glorious to God. Sin finished and destroyed—error, alienation and enmity annihilated—a world redeemed and saved—an entire race reconciled to their common Father in heaven—a ransomed humanity purified from every pollution and imperfection, joining their glad voices with the angelic hosts, in adoring and praising "Him who sitteth on the throne, and the Lamb forever !" And let every soul baptized into the spirit of Christ, respond, Amen, even so, Lord God Almighty !

"Man,——— all-immortal, hail !

Hail, Heaven, all-lavish of strange gifts to man !

Thine all the glory, man's the boundless bliss."

ARGUMENT IV.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

"O'er guilt (how mountainous!) with outstretched arms
Stern Justice, and soft-smiling Love, embrace,
Supporting, in full majesty, thy throne."

IMPORTANCE OF THE ATTRIBUTE OF JUSTICE.

WE have now arrived at an attribute of the Deity, which requires the candid and careful consideration of all who would obtain consistent and harmonious views of the character of the Most High. There is greater necessity, perhaps, for careful analysis, enlightened discrimination, and logical deduction, in regard to the Justice of God, than any other attribute. Not that Justice is more important in its nature, its office, or its operations in the Divine councils, than the other attributes, is this thorough investigation requisite, but because the prevailing views respecting it, are more radically erroneous and perverted. The errors of men in relation to the Goodness, Wisdom and Power of God, consist chiefly in limiting their energy and efficiency to a compass vastly too contracted for the movements of an infinite God. But the popular mistakes concerning the Justice of the Creator, extend to an entire perversion of this

attribute—to a total corruption of its every prompting and movement—and to the drawing of conclusions and forming of doctrines from its existence, directly the reverse of those that truth and consistency legitimately demand.

GOD JUST, AS WELL AS GOOD.

In urging the arguments in favor of the salvation of a lapsed world, which flow naturally and with beautiful harmony from the Goodness, Wisdom and Power of Jehovah, we are constantly met with the assertion that we overlook, or neutralize, or destroy, the Justice of the Most High—that we forget God is *just*, as well as *good*! It is very evident that all the weight which this objection possesses is drawn from the supposition that divine Justice acts in opposition to divine Goodness, and frustrates, or interrupts the great and glorious works which Goodness would otherwise have accomplished. If this *opposition* is not considered as an element, yea, as the sole work and office of Justice, the objection loses all its strength. For if Justice harmonizes and coöperates with Goodness, then it presents no obstacle to the perfect and happy consummation of every work and purpose which infinite Goodness can prompt.

We have demonstrated in other Arguments, the manifest self-contradiction of a proposition or doctrine, which rests upon the supposition of the antagonism of any of the Divine attributes. It evidently belongs to the first elements of all true deduction from the character of the Great First Cause, to

understand his attributes as existing and acting in unity and harmony—each fulfilling its necessary and glorious work with the abundant consent and coöperation of the remainder. To violate this self-evident consideration, is fatal to all just conceptions of God, to all consolatory views of the result of his works, and to all well-founded confidence in his holy name.

ABHORRENT VIEWS OF JUSTICE.

It has been for the want of due reflection on these considerations, that men have done such rank *injustice* to the Justice of God—that they have fallen into errors the most gross, irrational and abhorrent, in regard to this pure and beautiful attribute. It has been for the want of this reflection, that the Goodness and Mercy of the Deity have been shorn of their power and efficacy, and shrivelled into the smallest possible dimensions—vastly smaller, indeed, than they exist in man's selfish and imperfect heart—while Justice has been magnified into an iron-visaged, heartless monstrosity—lording it over the rest of the attributes with tyrannical will, and forbidding the display of their power, or the gratification of their divine and blessed promptings—wielding a flaming sword of infinite vengeance in hot pursuit of frail and erring mortals—thirsting eagerly for the life-blood of God's perishing creatures—and making all heaven resound with its vociferous and relentless demands for every grain of the "pound of flesh," of poor humanity!! These crude and repulsive views of Justice disfigure and

brutalize its nature in the eyes of those who entertain them; and so far from making this attribute the admiration and confidence of men, as it should be, cause it to be looked upon as the enemy of the world, and an object of utter detestation and abhorrence.

THE OFFICE OF JUSTICE.

The particular office of Justice, the work it has to perform, and the occasion which calls for its display, in the providence of God, are points on which there exists a wide diversity of opinion, as men's creeds and doctrines differ. According to the old system of pure Calvinism, God created the human race that he might have objects upon which he could display the glory of his divine attributes. To this general proposition there can be no possible objection—it is founded in reason and corroborated by Scripture. But *such* a display as Calvinism presents, not only violates the basis of the proposition, but shocks every right feeling in the human soul. It teaches that, the more perfectly to display the glory of his attributes, the Deity voluntarily subjected all his earthly creatures to a state of sin and death. From this condition he determined to raise a selected portion to ineffable glory and happiness, "without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions or causes moving him thereunto,"* and this to make an infinite display

* See Saybrook Platform.

of his Mercy or Grace. The remainder of mankind it was determined by their heavenly Father, should be plunged into a state of indescribable and endless wretchedness, as a punishment for their crimes—and this to display his infinite hatred of sin, and the inflexibility and glory of his *Justice*.

Such were the opinions of John Calvin and his legitimate followers, in regard to the glorious display of God's holy attributes. To say nothing of the manifest impiety of attributing such proceedings to "the God of Love," it is remarkable that the monstrous incongruity of these notions did not at once strike the most feeble intellect. To perpetuate sin forever—to compel his offspring to enter a state of misery, where they would be under an absolute necessity, whether physical or moral, to continue involved in iniquity through eternity—is a most singular method of manifesting *hatred for sin*. To the eye of human reason, (and this is the only reason of which we can have any conception,) there is no more effectual way in which Deity can manifest his hatred of sin, than to *destroy* sin, and save his feeble and dependent creatures from its power. And to this very natural and evident conclusion of reason, the Scriptures furnish a decided corroboration in the words of John the Baptist, in reference to Jesus Christ—"Behold the Lamb of God, which *taketh away* the sin of the world!" To *take away* the sin of the world, is certainly a more decisive method of manifesting hatred of sin, than to endow it with *immortality*, and enable it to prey upon the children of men forever.

Equally marvellous is this Calvinistic view of the display of God's *Justice*. For Jehovah first voluntarily and deliberately to create man with an express determination that he should be a sinner, so that it was entirely impossible that he should be anything but a sinner, and then to punish him with inexcruciable torments forever, *because he is a sinner*—and all this to display his *Justice*, as it is asserted—would be to act on principles the most contradictory and absurd that the human imagination can conceive. If there is such a quality or faculty as reason, and man has the power of exercising it, even in the smallest degree, then it can safely be decided, that such measure, on the part of the Creator, so far from being a display of *Justice*, would be an exhibition of unmixed and utter *cruelty*! And no assumption of prerogative on the part of the Deity, nor of any conceivable ability or freedom in man, can neutralize the infinite malignity of such a procedure. To give it the title of *Justice*, is to vilify and prostitute to the most diabolical purposes, the name of this holy principle! To attribute it to the pure and righteous God, what less is it than blasphemy? But it is an encouraging indication of increasing light and knowledge on religious subjects, that this system, so inconsistent with reason, and so utterly repugnant to all the better feelings of the human heart, is now rapidly passing away, and that few at this day can be found who give their assent in full to its awful deformities.

THE MORE PREVALENT VIEW OF JUSTICE.

The more moderate and liberal system, now generally prevailing, sometimes termed Arminianism, presents the Justice of the Deity, in a different light. This theory maintains that the Creator formed his earthly offspring, not only *willing*, but infinitely *desirous*, that they should all enter upon immortal purity and bliss. Nevertheless, for some reason, which has never been assigned, and which it is impossible for the human mind in its widest range to conceive, he placed their destiny entirely in their own keeping, and made it dependent on themselves, at least so far as direct and immediate causes are concerned, whether they should experience the happiness of heaven, or fall into a dark abyss of ceaseless anguish. In order that they might exercise this fearful power, he made them capable of judging of right and wrong, good and evil, truth and error, and gave them a moral power or freedom, of choosing between them. At the same time he set before them the consequences of preferring the one or the other. If they prefer to believe the truth, to practise right and good, the joys of an eternal heaven shall be their reward; but if they wilfully choose error and the practice of wrong and evil, the consequences will be an awful punishment in the world to come—and, moreover, as the sin they thus commit is against an infinite God, it becomes an infinite evil, and consequently the strict *Justice* of Jehovah demands that infinite or endless wretchedness should be inflicted as its

punishment. While this system is much less repugnant, in its outward appearance, to the holier sensibilities of the human soul, than the Calvinistic, yet it is no less in opposition to the clear decisions of reason, and the plain declarations of the word of God.

THE CHOICE OF ENDLESS BLISS OR WOE.

In the first place, in regard to this alleged *choice* of boundless bliss or boundless woe, a few suggestions are requisite. Although it may have the *appearance* of a choice in the sight of some, at the first glance, yet it assuredly possesses none of the *realities* of a choice. If the Deity ever placed such a choice before his creatures, (which is an utter impossibility, from his very nature,) it could have been but a dark and awful *formality*. In the creation of each human soul, our Maker as distinctly foresees what will be finally its condition, whether of happiness or woe, as he will behold it at its consummation. And in foreseeing that condition, he must have created the soul for it expressly, and for no other state. Hence it is an utter impossibility that a soul should arrive at any different state, as its final destination, than such as God foresaw at its creation. Such being the actual condition of things, it is self-evident the creature can have no choice that shall jeopardize, or hold in abeyance, or alter, in the slightest degree, the ultimate state which the Creator distinctly perceived would be the result of its existence. The creature may, and undoubtedly does, possess and exercise the power or liberty of

choice, in regard to many of the means or conditions through which the final state is attained. But in regard to that final state itself, he can possess no choice or power to change it from that which was seen by the eye of Omniscience from eternity ! And to insist that God placed such a choice before his creatures, when he knew no change could be effected by it, is but virtually charging him with acting upon principles of uncalled for and monstrous hypocrisy !

The supposition that the Creator entrusted his offspring with the choice of endless bliss or endless woe, will be found to be utterly baseless in every possible light in which it can be viewed. The Father of all spirits, is infinitely interested in the welfare of his offspring, desires only their everlasting good, and brings, as it is reasonable to suppose, all the energies and powers of his nature into requisition, to guard them from every conceivable exposure to ceaseless ruin. In this state of things, every true prompting of man's intellect forbids his harboring the supposition that God would put into the hands of his creatures, frail, erring, ignorant, blind and sinful, as he well knew they were, a power, a responsibility, so inconceivably weighty and momentous—so absolutely infinite in its consequences, as the decision of their endless destiny. And the monstrous absurdity of the supposition is magnified in a boundless degree, when it is considered that he distinctly saw, if he gave them this choice, it would prove the everlasting destruction of countless millions !

NO SUCH CHOICE GIVEN TO MAN.

But facts prove that such a choice has never been placed before man. The Bible is silent on the subject. In no part is there the slightest intimation or hint, that a choice of this description is in his power or his reach. The word of God calls upon him to make choice of the course he will pursue on a great variety of subjects, but nowhere does it require him to choose whether he shall be happy or miserable through eternity. The presenting of such a choice would be an absurdity. Who would choose to become forever wretched, when they could choose to be endlessly happy?

Not only is the Bible silent as to any choice of this description, but no such choice—no alternative of this nature, has ever, in fact, been placed before all mankind. Without reference to infants, idiots, and the insane, who are manifestly incapable of making any intelligent choice, have there not been millions of heathen, in all ages, who have never heard of God, or Christ, or the gospel, and who have never had the choice of immortal joy, or endless woe presented them? It is untrue, then, of far the greater part of mankind, that they have ever had an opportunity of making choice in the momentous matter of their final condition. What will be their doom? To say that they will be plunged into unending tortures, for not complying with terms of which they had no knowledge, and with which, consequently, they could not possibly comply, is to charge their Parent in heaven with infinite injustice

and cruelty! To contend, upon the other hand, that all to whom the offers of the gospel have never been made, will be allowed to enter upon eternal bliss, violates the fundamental principles of the system of doctrines we are now examining, besides charging partiality on the Deity. It is the grand distinguishing point of the popular theology of the present day, that salvation can never be obtained except through faith in Jesus Christ, exercised *in this life*. How, then, can the heathen, infants, idiots and the insane, be saved? If *they* can be saved without this exercise of faith in the present world, this main pillar of popular theology falls; for then any and every other being who does not believe on Christ in this life, can also be saved. God acts upon the same general principles in his dealings with all his creatures. Besides, if those who have lived and died in unavoidable ignorance of the religion of the Saviour, are saved in the immortal world, and any of those to whom that religion has been preached, are forever lost, then the proclamation of the gospel becomes a misfortune—an absolute evil to a portion of mankind. Who would not prefer to be plunged through life in the darkest heathenism, or to die in infancy, or pass their earthly existence in idiocy or insanity, and be *positively certain* of an eternity of happiness, than to live to maturity in possession of all the faculties of the soul, under the very droppings of the Christian sanctuary, with even the remotest *liability* of having this high privilege prove the source of endless pain? And who, especially, would voluntarily become

exposed to this infinite danger, when it is remembered how frail human nature is, and how liable the most enlightened are, under circumstances of the highest advantage, to fall into temptation and sin! A choice on this subject would simply be between a *certainly* and an *uncertainty*. And moreover, what is it but charging infinite partiality upon the Creator, to insist that while he has created the greater part of his offspring under those circumstances of ignorance, whereby their final happiness is perfectly secure, beyond the reach of failure, he has ordained that the remainder, to whom the gospel has been proclaimed, should run a hazard so fearful and perilous as an exposure to ceaseless wretchedness?

SIN NOT AN INFINITE EVIL.

The predicate that sin, being committed against an infinite God, is an infinite evil, and *justly* demands an infinite or endless punishment, may here receive a brief consideration. The idea upon which this position is based, that the higher the personage or power against whom sin is committed, the deeper the enormity of the guilt, is manifestly imperfect. If this were a true principle, then to steal a pin from a monarch, would involve as great an amount of moral guilt, as to rob a common personage of a fortune. Or, more abhorrent still, a man who should steal a pin from a monarch, would commit even a greater crime, than one who should defraud a lone widow and dependent orphans of all their possessions, and leave them to perish with starvation!

And upon the same principle, he who should do the smallest deed of kindness to the highest and wealthiest potentate of earth, would be vastly more deserving of reward from God and man, than though he were to rescue a famishing family from utter destitution. This view is a manifest violation of every just sense of right and wrong. All true conceptions of justice decide that the man who robs a poor widow and her helpless children of their scanty resources, is guilty of a sin incalculably greater than he who should rob a man of wealth, a prince, or a potentate, of the same, or even a much larger amount. Indeed, the ratio of guilt increases in the contrary direction, in cases of this description, from that laid down in the proposition under consideration. The more humble and ignorant, the more poor and wretched an individual is, the greater is the sinfulness of defrauding or injuring him, or sinning in any manner against his welfare.

In any case of wrong doing, the amount of guilt depends upon the *intentions* of the actor, and the degree of moral light under which the crime is committed. An insane person, or an idiot, is not held responsible for his actions, for the reason that his mind is darkened to all moral light and understanding, and his intentions being beyond his control, cannot be considered as involving either wrong or right. And in the same degree that a man is deprived of moral light, whereby he can distinguish right from wrong, to the same extent is the guilt of his crimes decreased. The criminality of a deed is to be decided upon the motives of its author,

rather than upon the character or consequences of the action itself. A man may intend to commit a great evil by an outward act of a trivial nature—or he may be deterred from an actual commission of the outward act, by the intervention of some unforeseen occurrence—yet, cherishing the wicked *intention*, as he did, is not his guilt as great, as though he had succeeded in carrying his purpose into execution? At least, cherishing such a criminal intention, though unable to succeed in accomplishing it, is he not much more guilty, than one who should *design* little or no actual wrong, and yet do a deed that should result in great injury? If, then, it is the motive, the intention that urges to action, which decides the degree of guilt in any given crime, then it is manifestly inconsistent to undertake to weigh its heinousness by the station or rank of the person-age against whom it is committed. But even admitting that the enormity of sin increases, in an exact ratio with the dignity of the power whose law is violated, still the *motives* of the actor cannot be thrown aside, without the most manifest disregard of Justice. These motives must be taken into the account, and magnify or decrease the amount of guilt. And before a shadow of probability can be shown that man can commit an infinite sin, it must be made evident that he was urged to it by an *infinite* motive, or a determination to do a deed which should produce an infinite evil—which is a manifest self-contradiction and impossibility.

DESTROYS DEGREES IN GUILT.

The idea that the sins of men are infinite evils, is absurdly erroneous in another respect, viz., it destroys all *degrees* in guilt, and attributes to the most frivolous species of wickedness, an amount of criminality that cannot be surpassed by the blackest deeds of rapine and blood, that man or devils could commit. If each sin is an infinite evil, then each sin is of the same heinousness, and should receive the same punishment. Moreover, if this is the principle on which God administers his government, it is a principle which should become incorporated into human governments. Hence the judge should pass the same sentence upon all criminals; for the man who steals a loaf of bread, to stay the hunger of his starving children, is equally guilty with the wretch who fires his neighbor's house, or kills his brother man, and should receive a punishment of the same nature and severity. Should we not beware of attributing to the all-wise God, a principle of action so rankly unjust and imperfect, that even man shrinks from it with utter abhorrence? And, besides, what mean those passages scattered throughout the Bible, which emphatically declare that the punishment of the wicked shall be *according* to their deeds?

To defraud a brother man to the amount of one farthing, is to violate the just law of heaven, and to sin against God. According to the hypothesis under consideration, this act is an *infinite sin*, an infinite evil—i. e., it involves an amount of guilt that is lit-

erally and absolutely boundless and endless. And as no guilt can exceed infinite guilt, then though a man were to riot in every species of wickedness through his whole life, and through eternity—yea, were all men, and all angels, and Jehovah himself, (may Heaven pardon the thought!) to devote all their energies to the commission of crime, the whole weight of their combined guilt could not exceed the guilt of him, who defrauds his neighbor of a farthing, either in duration or heinousness—because it could not all amount to more than an *infinite sin!!* Such a violation of reason, sense and justice, is repelled at once by the mind, and need not be dwelt upon for a moment. A stream cannot rise higher than its fountain—an effect cannot exceed its cause. Man being himself finite in his nature and capabilities, his deeds must necessarily be of a corresponding character. He can no more do an infinite action, either good or evil, than he can create a universe. The Deity alone being infinite, in nature and capability, can alone be the author of actions which have infinite results.

CONSEQUENCES OF ALLOWING SIN TO BE INFINITE.

Were it to be allowed that sin is indeed an infinite evil, then the Justice of God could truly demand an infinite or endless punishment. But this would involve consequences equally and terribly disastrous to all humanity, without exception. All men have sinned—hence, on this hypothesis, all have committed infinite evils, all are consequently deserving infinite punishment, and the righteous

demands of God's Justice can never be satisfied, without the infliction of that punishment. The proposition, therefore, carried out to its legitimate conclusion, plunges the entire race of man into endless despair.

To avoid this startling result of such a course of reasoning, it is in vain to resort to the prevalent doctrine of the *atonement*—that Jesus Christ bore in his own person the punishment due for the sins of the world—thus satisfying the demands of God's infinite Justice, and screening the sinner from that endless pain to which he was exposed. This only involves the whole subject in greater difficulties, and, as might be anticipated when error is brought to the support of error, produces conclusions still more in contradiction to reason and justice.

JUSTICE NOT SATISFIED WITH AN INNOCENT VICTIM.

If the sinner by his crimes, has *justly* merited a certain punishment, then Justice can never be satisfied, until that punishment is inflicted. To allow the sinner to escape entirely, and to inflict those stripes which he alone deserved, upon a being who was perfectly innocent and holy, would be adding the most repulsive weakness and cruelty to the rankest injustice. The sinner has committed a certain amount of wrong. How can that wrong be remedied, or how can the breach which has thus been made, be in any manner healed, by inflicting the same amount of wrong or evil, upon another and an innocent personage? What good can be

accomplished to God or man, or how can pure and even-handed Justice be in any manner satisfied, by this new enactment of evil upon the innocent? Is it to be supposed that infinite Justice is a blind passion in the Deity, raging and thirsting for *blood*, BLOOD, BLOOD!—and that, like the ferocious beast, it eagerly seizes and indiscriminately devours whatever victim is thrown within its voracious clutch, good or bad, innocent or guilty—caring for nothing but to satiate its sanguinary appetite? God forbid! Every pure emotion in the human soul revolts at such a conception of Justice. How, then, can God's Justice accept of, and be satisfied with the punishment of the innocent in place of the guilty? Is there no distinction between innocence and guilt?—are they both held in the same light by Justice? If not, how can its claims be equally as well satisfied with the sacrifice of the one as the other? If it demands the punishment of the guilty, how can its demands be cancelled by the sufferings of the guiltless? Justice requires *punishment* for the liquidation of its claims; but injury inflicted on the innocent, is not *punishment*—it is simply undeserved pain and torture. What return can such tortures make to the dues of Justice? The *willingness* of the innocent to suffer in place of the guilty, alters not the features of the case in the slightest degree, so far as pure Justice is concerned. Justice has no demand, no claim against an innocent being—there is nothing in such a being—nothing that such a being can do, or suffer to be done—that can give Justice that which it demands of the sinner,

viz., *punishment*—in other words, the suffering of the *guilty*. So far from the principles of Justice being satisfied with the sufferings of innocence, they are manifestly and rankly violated by it. The office and duty of Justice, among other things, is to *reward* innocence, and protect it from injury. And it would be a violation of its office, and a perversion of its nature, to become the voluntary injurer of an innocent and meritorious being—especially thus to injure such an one because some wicked being had committed wrong. Were justice to adopt such an expedient, under any conceivable circumstances, it would commit a greater wrong than the sin which it pretends thus to punish!¹

EFFECT OF ALLOWING THE COMMON VIEW OF THE ATONEMENT.

Were it to be allowed that Christ actually bore the punishment due for the sins of all mankind, and that divine Justice permitted its claims to be satisfied in this manner, so far from strengthening the theory in support of which this hypothesis is advanced, it would entirely overthrow it. If Justice has had its claims for the sins of all mankind *satisfied* by the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ, (which is the prevalent and popular theory of the

¹ The reader will understand that these remarks have no bearing against the innocent and meritorious voluntarily laboring and enduring sufferings, if need be, to promote the welfare of the guilty. This is praiseworthy, and even demanded in many cases. But this is something very different from enduring that *punishment* which is alone due the *guilty*.

Atonement at the present day,) then it manifestly can have no demand against the sinner—and the whole of sinful humanity, must escape all punishment, both in this world, and in the future existence. There can be no avoiding this conclusion, in the clear light of reason, upon the premises laid down. It is in vain to urge that the sinner must comply with certain terms, before he can be benefited by this Atonement. If the price has been paid by the Redeemer—if the ransom has already been given—by which the sins of all mankind have been atoned for, and the demands of Justice cancelled—then the matter is fully settled, and cannot be unsettled, nor depend upon any contingencies. Christ has fulfilled *all* the terms that Justice can lay down in the premises, and it cannot, therefore, have any terms for the sinner. To contend that after Christ has complied with the terms which Justice exacts of the sinner, and after he has perfectly cancelled every claim and demand for his punishment, Justice still holds the same demands against the sinner, and in failure of complying with certain terms, will inflict the same infinite punishment upon him, that it would if Christ had never been punished in his stead, is to violate all rules of logic, all deductions of reason, all sense of right, and to represent the Justice of God in a light the most abhorrent and repulsive! Such a theory makes Justice a dark principle of infinite cruelty. It first punishes the innocent Son of God in the place of the sinner, and in full for all that it has any right to demand of the sinner, and then, infinitely *unsatisfied* with

this infinite *satisfaction*, it demands a *double* payment, and pours out torment unutterable and unending upon the sinner himself! Horror of horrors! this the *Justice* of God! The soul of the upright man shrinks from it in dread disgust—the mind rejects it, as an awful violation of the first principles of reason! Imperfect as humanity is, there has never been a good man in existence who would be guilty of such proceedings in his dealings with his fellow-beings—not one who would not declare them, if manifested in human affairs, as basely unjust and cruel. And yet

“Shall the vile race of flesh and blood
 Contend with their Creator, God?
 Shall mortal worms presume to be
 More holy, wise, or *just* than he?”

The view of divine Justice which has been above noticed, it must be seen, violates all human conceptions of right and wrong. It makes God's Justice an infinite compound of *weakness* and *cruelty*—*Weakness* in allowing a part of mankind to escape *all* punishment due their sins—*Cruelty* in punishing the remainder *forever*, for the sins of this short life; and this too, after Christ has already borne all the punishment, and satisfied all the demands, that Justice could exact of the sinner.

JUSTICE NOT RETALIATION OR REVENGE.

The great errors into which religionists have fallen, on this subject, originate in false conceptions

of the *nature* and *office* of the Justice of the Most High. Many seem to view Justice as simply a species of *retaliation*—a rendering of evil for evil. The sinner has become guilty of committing a certain amount of *evil*; and Justice, it is supposed, consists in merely inflicting on the sinner a similar, or greater amount of evil, in return—for no other reason but to injure and torment him, because he has injured or tormented some one else. This is the prevalent view of the nature of God's Justice—and it is, alas! too generally the principle upon which Justice is administered among men. But even this poor, imperfect, and wicked rule, will not sustain the doctrine of an eternity of punishment. When an injury has been inflicted by man on his brother man, all that this savage principle can with the least shadow of consistency demand, is that there shall be an *equal* amount of injury inflicted on the guilty one. Hence, as it is impossible for man to commit but a limited degree of evil on his fellow-being, to pour out an unlimited, an eternal degree of evil upon him in return, would be a manifest and infinite violation of even this wretched system of retaliation.

That the principle of retaliation—this rendering of evil for evil, blow for blow, blood for blood—(which is no higher rule of action than that which prevails in the brute creation)—is not a principle that enters into the Justice of God, is evident from the fact, that it is in direct violation of both the letter and spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ. In the beautiful and instructive Sermon on the Mount, the

Saviour spake as follows: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth—[precisely the idea, and all the idea, that many have of Justice]—but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil"—i. e., that ye shall not retaliate for wrong, by doing a similar wrong. This would not be *justice*, but *revenge*. Is there not a distinction between these two principles?—are justice and revenge to be confounded together? If not, what is the distinction between them? This leads to the consideration of another inquiry of great importance:—

THE NATURE OF JUSTICE.

What is Justice? As a general answer, Justice is the doing of *right* to *all* parties concerned, in every given transaction. And what is the doing of *right*? It is the doing of *good*—that *kind* of good which the peculiar circumstances of the parties require, for mutual and general benefit. In other words, Justice is the administering such treatment to every individual as his condition demands, in the sight of pure Goodness. In a more restricted, yet a still proper sense, as applicable to moral conduct, Justice is the *remedy* for wrong committed, and the encouragement to all right doing. Such being plainly the nature of Justice, it will be seen that it is solely a co-worker with exalted and perfect Goodness, and is not a *destructive*, but a *remedial*, principle. It has none of the ingredients of evil intermixed in its nature. And to attribute to it any office of an evil or destructive character, or any

work in opposition to the dictates of enlightened Goodness, is plainly to violate its fundamental principles.

THE OFFICE OF JUSTICE REMEDIAL.

Let it be repeated, Justice is the *remedial* agent of Goodness, in all cases of wrong doing. When a deed of wickedness has been committed, Goodness—that principle which seeks the welfare of all—has been violated; and it is the first dictate of Goodness that this violence should be remedied, and things be restored to their former condition of harmony. To produce this desirable restoration, is the work of Justice. How can it be done? Not simply by injuring the guilty one—not by inflicting blow for blow—not by spilling his blood in return for the blood he may have spilled of another. This will fulfil the law of *retaliation*—it will gratify the principle of *revenge*—but it will not *remedy* the evil that has been inflicted, in the slightest degree; neither will it restore the parties to their former condition of reconciliation, nor bring back that equilibrium in the moral elements, which was violated in the wicked action. Hence a process of this description cannot be called the proceedings of Justice. The principle of Justice, rightly understood, can have little or nothing to do with it. What then, is the work of Justice in a given case of wickedness, of any description? It evidently is to heal, remedy, restore—to repair the breach which has been made. And this desirable work can be accomplished, not by committing the same evil upon the guilty, that

the guilty inflicted on the innocent, but by pursuing a process, which shall bring the offender to see, and feel, and deplore his guilt—that shall eradicate from his heart those wicked impulses and false principles, which urged him to commit his sinful deeds—and that shall bring about a sweet and perfect reconciliation between the injurer and the injured, thus blotting out forever, the wrong committed. So far as the applying of penal punishments—the infliction of pains and penalties—are necessary to produce *this* result—they are right and good, as well as salutary by way of example and warning to deter others from sin—and so far they form a part of the means and resources of Justice. *But no farther.* Justice itself, as peremptorily as Mercy, forbids that any pain should be inflicted even upon the guilty, which cannot be productive of *good*.

These remarks apply with much greater force to the Justice of God, than the justice of man—inasmuch as this principle is immeasurably more pure and perfect in the Creator, than in the creature. The Justice of the Most High is an infinitely holy and lovely attribute. It has not the contamination of hatred, revenge, or any other earthly imperfection—and possesses no disposition to destroy, torture, or injure any created thing; but harmonizing in its purposes with all the other attributes of the Deity, its only object is to do *good*. The happiness of all created intelligences depends upon their union and harmony with the great Jehovah, or with the principles of Truth, Holiness, Equity, Goodness, Mercy, and all the attributes that make up

his perfect nature. Sin of any description, and in any being, violates this harmony, and necessarily brings wretchedness into the soul that commits it. In the councils of God, it has been given to Justice, as its office and work, in every case of sin, to restore this necessary and desirable harmony, which has been thus interrupted, and to encourage a perseverance therein. Let the reader start not at the declaration that it is the office of Justice to discharge this duty of restoration and encouragement towards *all* sinners. Are not all men the offspring of God?¹ Does not his love, his "great," his infinite love, extend to all?—not only to the righteous, but also to the sinful and depraved?² Is he not willing and desirous that *all* shall repent and be restored from sin to holiness?³

WHAT MEASURES WILL JUSTICE PURSUE.

It being, then, the province of Justice, to enter upon a course of treatment with every sinful soul, to restore it to harmony with God, what description of proceeding shall we attribute to it? It cannot be supposed that Justice would take such measures as would totally defeat its own purposes. And yet to inflict upon the sinner a punishment which will be *endless* in duration, would be literally and effectually to thwart the very object for which its chastisements were designed. This object, as we have seen, is to heal, to unite, to harmonize the sinful

¹ See Acts xvii. 28.

² Eph. ii. 1-5; Rom. v. 8; 1 Tim. i. 15.

³ 2 Pet. iii. 9.

soul with its Creator, and thus restore the violated principles of Right and Good. How can this be done by an eternal series of tortures? Can endless woundings ever heal a sin-sick soul? Can plunging the spirit into a deep and dark abyss of ceaseless sin, restore that spirit to spiritual life and holiness? Can a soul involved in everlasting agony and discord, where the saving light of truth can never penetrate, and the sweet, attractive voice of love can never be heard, be brought into harmony and concord with the blessed Spirit of the Eternal? If these inquiries must be answered in the negative, then the Justice of God can never adopt such measures, nor any of like description. Were it to do so, it would disrobe itself of its pure and lovely character of Justice, and, being engaged in a work which would be of no avail, no benefit, no good, to God, angels, or men, would become nothing less than an instrument of deliberate and infinite *retaliation and revenge!*

The attempt, therefore, to prove an eternity of punishment, from the Justice of God, is futile in the extreme. The whole influence of this divine attribute is in the opposite direction, and yields a powerful support to the elevating and enrapturing doctrine of Universal Reconciliation. So far as good can come from the infliction of pains, whether of body or soul—so far as the administration of stripes is necessary to cause the sinner to break off from his transgressions and bring him to reflection, repentance and purity of heart—so far and so long will Justice inflict punishment *for the accomplish-*

ment of these results. The literal meaning of the word *chastisement*, or *punishment*, strongly corroborates this position. According to Webster, it signifies "to inflict pain, for the purpose of punishing an offender, and *recalling him to his duty*—to correct; to purify *by expunging faults.*" That the chastisements demanded by infinite Justice, are for this purpose only, and that they will produce this influence, is abundantly demonstrated by the language of inspiration—"And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,¹ and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. * * * * Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure, but he for our PROFIT, *that we might become partakers of his holiness.* Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward *it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.*" It is for the object here set forth, and for no other, that Justice demands the infliction of punishment upon the sinner.

¹ Whom does the Lord love? The whole world—the sinful and the righteous—"God so loved the world," etc. See John iii. 16, 17.

GOD'S ATTRIBUTES MUST ALL BE SATISFIED.

Reason assures us that in order to the perfect harmony of the divine councils, and the perfect happiness of the Deity, all his attributes must be infinitely satisfied—i. e., each must accomplish its entire work, and fulfil its whole office, and gratify its full desire, in regard to every being and object within the field of its operations. This gratification his Truth can never experience, if Error, its opposite, is perpetuated forever—nor Holiness, if Sin is continued in being eternally—nor Goodness, if Evil will never cease—nor Justice, if *wrong* remains unremedied as long as God shall exist—nor Mercy, if wretchedness is prolonged to endless time. For in this case, there would be works of the most vital importance unaccomplished, and the serenity and peace of the Most High would be forever interrupted by the infinite yearnings of *unsatisfied* attributes. To the *temporary* existence of error, sin, evil, etc., eventuating in, and being promotive of, still higher degrees of truth, holiness and happiness than could otherwise be attained, the attributes can be perfectly reconciled, as is self-evident—but not to an everlasting existence of the same. These suggestions apply especially, and with their full force, to the attribute of Justice. The Justice of God must be amply *satisfied* in all its demands, requirements, and desires. If it does not experience this satisfaction, then infinite *injustice*, which is but infinite *wrong*, will exist forever in the universe of Jehovah—the bare supposition of which would be an

impeachment of every attribute in the Godhead. And how can the demands of God's Justice be satisfied? Not by the infliction of pains and tortures, *as an end*—i. e., forever. No principle, human or divine, can be satisfied with this, but the ferocious passions of *retaliation* and *revenge*. Even if inflictions of endless woe *could* gratify Justice, the demands of that attribute would be forever *unsatisfied*, because it could never receive the full amount of all it requires. Divine Justice cannot be satisfied by outpourings of wretchedness, but only by producing an influence in the souls of those subjected to its dealings, corresponding with its own *nature*—viz., emotions that shall be characterized by justice, truth and goodness. To produce this influence, is the object of all its exertions, all its operations, and all its inflictions of chastisement. And when such an influence shall be wrought in every created soul that has been contaminated by sin—and *not until then*—will the demands of Justice be satisfied, and this holy attribute finish its work upon sinners!

THE WHOLE FIELD OF JUSTICE CONSIDERED.

The Justice of God, to be properly understood in all its bearings, should not be viewed and estimated, solely by its operations in this world, or in the life to come. Its connection with humanity dates back to an earlier era. And it is in consequence of failing to behold it in a more enlarged light, that so many have erred respecting it. Survey this attribute in the whole circle of its operations with man-

kind, and so far from affording any countenance to the soul chilling sentiment of endless sinning and woe, it utterly annihilates it, and throws its entire influence in behalf of "the restitution of all things."

It must be acknowledged, as one of the simplest deductions of logic, that when an independent being, entirely free from any outward control or constraint, acting solely upon the volition of his own will, deliberately and knowingly enters upon any given action, or series of actions, for his own gratification, with a perfect knowledge and foresight of all the ultimate consequences which will ensue therefrom, he alone is accountable for the results, and must be estimated as good or evil, just or unjust, according to the nature of the results. It is not improper that our contemplations of the Deity, should be under the light of this self-evident proposition. That God, in the creation of the human race, was self-moved—that he was under no compulsion, or necessity, or restraint, but acted voluntarily, according to his own free will and pleasure—will be universally admitted. That in thus creating, he saw distinctly the actual and final condition into which every member of the family of man, would at length arrive, as the result of their being, through whatever changes, or by whatever causes or influences, this condition will be reached—and that the Creator, with man's final condition thus clearly before him, could create each being, or allow to remain in nonentity, as he pleased—is also a position that carries its own demonstration with it. It will likewise be admitted, that at the point of

time in past eternity, when Jehovah determined upon the creation of mankind, infinite *Justice* was then, as now, one of his primal attributes, and that then as now, it was the antipodes of *wrong* and *cruelty*, and the great advocate of *right* and *equity*. This is the time, therefore—when the whole being, the entire existence, and the everlasting destiny of man was in agitation and about to be determined—and these the circumstances under which to view the influence and demands of infinite *Justice*, in regard to the existence of the human race. If it would be *right* for an independent God, acting voluntarily and solely according to his own pleasure, to create myriads of his children, and himself subject them to vanity or sin,¹ clearly foreseeing, their nature and circumstances would be such that their existence would result in an eternal bondage to sin, evil and woe,—then infinite *Justice* would have given its full, unqualified approbation to the act. But if such an exercise of Infinite Power upon unconscious, helpless beings, whose voice was not heard in the matter, who had not even the poor privilege of *choice* given them, would be *wrong*, manifestly, awfully *wrong*, as it would, if we can form any conception of the nature of *wrong*, then, to say nothing of the attributes of Goodness and Mercy, the voice of *Justice* would be heard in heaven, forbidding, in unqualified terms, the work of man's creation. "No! no!" we may believe would be the language of this holy attribute, "if

¹ See Rom. viii. 20.

the beings whose creation is now in contemplation, cannot be ushered into life, without their existence resulting in a destiny so horrid, or without even running a hazard so awful, then allow them to remain in the unconscious sleep of nonentity !”

THE CLAIMS OF INFINITE JUSTICE.

Created as they were, by a higher, an irresistible Power, which saw the end from the beginning, without any volition, choice or consent of their own, the attribute of Justice, under the prompting of its own eternal principles of rectitude, equity and right, puts in an infinite claim, that the human race shall not, either collectively or individually, become losers, by their existence. Hence were one member of humanity to be interminably miserable, it would be at an expense of the eternal violation of Justice. This attribute must be blotted from the nature of Jehovah, and its voice forever hushed in the councils of heaven, before such an event could be allowed to transpire !

Let it be repeated, this is the point of time—when the original design was formed, and the plan fixed upon in the councils of God, for the creation of mankind—to consider the claims of infinite Justice in regard to man. These claims include the end, the final state of humanity, as well as the commencement and intermediate stages of existence. There are many claims which Justice can have upon men, at subsequent periods of their existence—claims growing out of their endowment with

moral freedom—claims for the desecration of the power and liberty bestowed upon them, to purposes of evil and sin—claims which demand the infliction of severe chastisements and long continued punishments, for wilful wrong-doing—yet reason forbids the supposition that any claim of this description can reach to the demanding of the infliction of endless pains. This would make God's Justice self-contradictory—would bring its claims in conflict with each other—would make a secondary claim, founded on the imperfections of a creature whom God voluntarily "made subject to vanity," to overbalance and outreach the *original* claim which Justice had, not on the creature, but on Deity himself, that the existence of the creature, conferred as it was, should not subject it to everlasting loss. Simple consistency calls for the belief that no subsequent claim of Justice upon man, can deny or thwart its original claim, registered in the councils of heaven, that beings ushered into life, with no voluntary choice or action of their own, shall not suffer endless pain by that existence. And the truth of this position is especially manifest, when it is considered that the original claim was made with all the subsequent actions and circumstances of each being clearly and distinctly in view.

The secondary claims of God's Justice for punishments to be inflicted on man, so far from being in contradiction to its original claim upon Jehovah that the creature shall not suffer endless loss by its creation, are confirmatory of that claim, and designed expressly to secure its entire fulfilment.

Justice demands that the sinner shall be adequately punished for his wickedness, because such punishment will be for his benefit—will have a tendency, in combination with other and higher influences, to turn him from his evil ways, and bring him into that state of righteousness and purity, which is indispensable to his everlasting well-being. Thus punishments inflicted under these secondary claims of Justice, but tend to bring the creature up to that condition of happiness which is requisite to the perfect fulfilment of its original claim for his final bliss!

REASONS FOR MAN'S SUBJECTION TO VANITY.

The reasons which moved the Deity to create his earthly offspring "subject to vanity," and exposed to those necessary chastisements which Justice rightfully demands, are mostly beyond our present comprehension. Still there are some satisfactory glimpses to be obtained on this point. It seems to be a fixed and universal order of Providence, so far as our knowledge extends, not to create any living thing, in a state of maturity and perfection, at once. God has so arranged his plans that existence commences in weakness and imperfection, and by gradual progression through various stages, more or less protracted, arrives at length at the full development and perfection of all its inherent powers. Indeed, this is one of the prominent distinctions between the *organized* and the *unorganized* parts of creation. The former, including man, animals, and vegetables, commencing existence in a germ, containing, it is true, all the qualities and properties

exhibited in perfection, but reaching that perfection only by a gradual unfolding of these properties. The latter, composed of the mineral or geological world, is formed at once in full possession of all the properties and powers ever possessed.

THE SOUL PROGRESSIVE.

The young bird makes many attempts, and meets with many failures, before it can expand its wings, and soar joyously up to meet the morning light. But each incipient trial, ending though it may in failure, adds renewed strength to its wings, and yields instructing lessons of experience, to make succeeding efforts the more successful. So of the human soul. Formed as it is, for high degrees of immortal knowledge, purity and bliss, and possessing inherently every faculty and capability requisite for the lofty attainments for which it is designed, yet it enters not into the immediate enjoyment of these attainments, nor can it rise at once to their possession. It is only by slow progression, by a gradual unfolding, enlarging and strengthening of its native capabilities, in the exercise of its moral freedom, through a long series of modifications and changes, more or less trying and painful, that the soul finally gains strength to soar upward to the possession and enjoyment of the fulness of heavenly knowledge and immortal beatitude. In this progression towards its destined perfection, it meets with many *failures* by the way, and displays the weakness of its trembling wings by its frequent fallings into sin and error. But as it is in its *nature*

to soar, these failures, adding the lessons of experience to its native strength, will enable it finally to surmount its imperfections, and advance to a participation in infinite glories.¹

THIS WORLD INTRODUCTORY AND PREPARATORY TO
ANOTHER.

"Through various parts our glorious story runs;
Time gives the preface, endless age unrolls
The volume of human fate."

Under the light of these reflections, we may well suppose that this world, being the first stage of man's existence, where the soul manifests its powers in great imperfection, is a state of discipline, in preparation for loftier attainments hereafter. It may be believed that here, through temptations given way to, and temptations withstood—through a mingling experience of sorrow and joy, disappointment and fruition, self-denial and gratification, chastisement and reward—each and all tempered

¹ In the following extract from the works of one of the ancient fathers, St. Gregory, of Nysa, will be found an idea similar to that expressed above, though connected with the crude notions of that age, in regard to purgatory:—"In order that a man might be left to the dignity of free will, and evil at the same time be taken from him, Divine will thus devised: He allows him [man] to remain subject to what himself has chosen, that having tasted of the evil which he desired, and learned by experience how bad an exchange has been made, he might again feel an ardent wish to lay down the load of those vices and inclinations which are contrary to reason; and thus in this life being renovated by prayers and the pursuit of wisdom, or in the next being expiated by the purging fire, he might recover the state of happiness which he had lost."—*Orat. pro defunctis*. T. ii., pp. 1066, 7, 8.

according to the peculiar circumstances of every individual, Divine Providence trains the souls of all human beings to the possession of a greater amount of spiritual strength, to higher attainments and loftier perfections, than they could arrive at through any other process. That the soul should frequently fall into temporary sin, in the first exercise of an endowment of so high and peculiar a nature as moral freedom, and in its efforts to struggle up to loftier attainments, is no more surprising than that the child should stumble and fall in its early endeavors to walk alone, or the scholar should often err in working out his mathematical problems; yet the sins thus committed form no insurmountable obstacle to its future progress or final success. Tasting the bitterness of sin, and ere long fully realizing, from experience, its inseparable connection with pain and wretchedness, it will seek the more anxiously after that righteousness which alone can impart happiness and peace. And is not a holiness of heart thus attained through the instructive lessons of experience, of a more enlightened, stable and enduring character, than that which should spring from intuition alone, or that which owes its continuance simply to exemption from temptation? St. Paul, as already quoted, gives great weight of evidence to these views, in the declaration that man was subjected to vanity or imperfection, in *hope*, and only with an express view of a universal *deliverance* therefrom.¹ In the various stages of this discipline

¹ See Rom. viii. 18—22.

and progression, divine Justice has an important office to fulfil. It is Justice that rewards for temptations withstood, for obstacles overcome, and for merits acquired. It is the same Justice, too, that administers chastisement for yielding to temptation, and for wandering into paths of sin and evil. But every blow which Justice, this minister of a God of love, this friend of man, inflicts—every pang it imposes on the guilty—is administered in kindness, and designed to restore the wasted powers, to call out the latent energies of the soul, to bring it back to the true path for its footsteps, and encourage and aid it to press on and up to those higher fields of knowledge and happiness which are more congenial to its nature, and for which it was originally destined. To attribute any other office or object to God's Justice, is to violate its principles, and desecrate it to unholy and evil purposes.

JUSTICE ONE OF THE MAIN PILLARS OF UNIVERSAL SALVATION.

In travelling through the course of reasoning contained in this chapter, it must have become evident, it would seem, to the consistent and candid mind, that the attribute of Justice, so far from affording even the fragment of a basis on which to build an argument against the salvation of the world, is one of the strongest pillars by which that divine doctrine is supported. Were there none of the other lovely attributes of the Most High revealed to the world, the knowledge that he possesses to an infinite

degree the holy principle of Justice, would be amply sufficient, when duly weighed and understood in all its bearings, to lead the reflecting mind up to the high and glorious platform of Universal Redemption.

THIS POSITION CONFIRMED BY SCRIPTURE.

All those passages of Scripture couched in the form of an antithesis, which emphatically proclaim the salvation of the world, are based on the plain principles of even-handed Justice, and demonstrate conclusively the views advanced in this chapter. "As in Adam, all die, even so" it is but *just* that "in Christ shall all be made alive."¹ "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so," on the plain principles of *justice*, "by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."² "As by one man's disobedience [the] many were made sinners, so" according to the righteous demands of *justice*, "by the obedience of one, shall [the] many be made righteous."³ "For he hath concluded them all in unbelief, that" in fulfilment of the righteous claims of *infinite justice*, "he might have mercy upon all."⁴ How appropriate to conclude these remarks by joining with the Apostle, who, in view of the wonderful movements of that all-wise Providence, which brings forth the highest benefits, the brightest joys, of universal humanity, from the very subjection of the world to imperfection and sin, breaks forth in the

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 22. ² Rom. v. 18. ³ Rom. v. 19. ⁴ Rom. xi. 32.

sublime doxology—"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For OF him, and THROUGH him, and TO him, are ALL THINGS: to whom be glory forever. Amen."¹

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower."

¹ Rom. xi. 33—36.

ARGUMENT V.

THE MERCY OF GOD.

"But Mercy is above the sceptred sway!
It is an Attribute of God himself!
And earthly power doth then show likest God's,
When Mercy seasons Justice."

MERCY THE LOVELIEST OF THE ATTRIBUTES.

HAIL! loveliest of the Attributes! brightest and gentlest of the sister band that minister before the Throne of Eternal Love! Hail! sweet and tender Mercy! Friend of the friendless! Pitying angel, who weepst over frailty and sin—who fain would put thy supporting arm beneath the head of the guilty repentant, plunged into the depths of wretchedness and despair, and whisper hope and peace! Though all thy sister attributes were to stand back appalled at the dark mountain mass of earthly guilt, and leave the victims of ignorance and sin in desolation and ruin, yet would thy plaintive and affectionate voice, meek-eyed spirit! be heard throughout heaven, pleading for poor, fallen humanity, and urging, with a zealous earnestness which would take no refusal, their very helplessness and ruin, as a claim upon the pity of the happy dwellers in immortality! How pleasant the task to inquire into

thy nature, thy influence and office, in the Divine councils! How refreshing to explore the gushing fountains, the broad streams, of thy tenderness! How delightful to expatiate upon the lovely graces which cluster around thee, and render thy melting appeals irresistible to the hardest heart!

In contemplating the Mercy of God, we enter upon a new, and, if possible, a higher and brighter field of exploration. Here, also, whether we walk under the light of Reason, or the brighter light of Revelation, if we are but faithful to our advantages, we shall be able to reap rich harvests of immortal truth, in payment for our researches. For here, as in every other portion of the perfect Providence of God, it will be found that the voice of true and pure Reason, and the voice of Revelation, harmoniously unite in proclaiming the same holy and lovely truths.

MERCY A FAVORITE THEME WITH SCRIPTURE WRITERS.

The attribute of Mercy is a favorite theme with the Scripture writers. They expatiate upon it with delight and rapture; and, as in the case of Goodness, they depict its various lovely and valuable characteristics in every variety of impressive language. First, Mercy is declared to be an attribute of the Most High—"Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth Mercy."¹ Then the numerous attractive qualities pertaining to the mercy of Jehovah are enumerated. It is described as a *great* Mercy—"Thy mercy is *great*

¹ Ps. lxii. 12.

unto the heavens."¹ As *plenteous*—"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and *plenteous* in mercy."² *Good*—"Thy mercy is *good*."³ *Rich*—"Who is *rich* in mercy."⁴ *Tender and impartial*—"His *tender* mercies are over *all* his works."⁵ *Sure*—"I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the *sure* mercies of David."⁶ To exercise Mercy, is the delight of God—"He retaineth not his anger forever, because he *delighteth* in mercy."⁷ His Mercy is literally *unending*—"His mercy endureth *forever*."⁸

There is no disagreement, and can be none, among theologians, in regard to the fact, that Mercy is an attribute of the Deity. But while acknowledging this fundamental truth, it is held frequently in great inconsistency with itself, and most singular and contradictory conceptions have been formed of its demands, and its office, in the Providence of God.

MERCY OFFERS NO TERMS.

The Mercy of the Creator is supposed by many to manifest itself towards mankind, in offering them *terms* of salvation, and thus opening a way by which they can secure the immortal joys of heaven. But how Mercy can be discovered in such a transaction, it is difficult to conceive. God foresees the end from the beginning. He made mankind such beings as he pleased, and knew precisely what course they would pursue. What Mercy there

¹ Ps. lvii. 10.

² Ps. ciii. 8.

³ Ps. cix. 21.

⁴ Eph. ii. 4.

⁵ Ps. cxlv. 9.

⁶ Isa. lv. 3.

⁷ Micah vii. 18.

⁸ Ps. cvi. 1.

could be in offering *terms* of salvation, when he foresaw that, constituted and situated as they were, multitudes of his children would be so blinded by sin and ignorance, as never to accept of them—or of *opening a way* to heaven, in which he well knew, before he opened it, they would not walk—it is impossible to comprehend. If our heavenly Parent really possesses any Mercy for his offspring, it is hard to understand how it can be believed he would take such a singular method of showing it to them—a method which he foreknew would prove entirely abortive in the case of millions, and result in their everlasting removal far beyond the reach of Mercy. But a great mistake is evidently made in the supposition that *Mercy* offers *terms*. It is *Justice*, and not Mercy, that proposes terms and conditions. A compliance with *terms*, necessarily supposes *merit*, and it is the office of Justice to reward merit. If salvation is obtained by compliance with certain terms, then it is *earned*, and is the plain award of Justice. Mercy has no terms affixed to the bestowal of its gifts.

GOD'S MERCY UNCHANGEABLE AND ETERNAL.

While, again, it is admitted in theory that the Mercy of God is extended over all men, and will endure forever, yet these scriptural views are singularly contradicted in their practical application to doctrines. For it is at the same time believed, that from a vast portion of his creatures, his Mercy is withdrawn after the lapse of a very brief period,

and that towards them his Mercy will not endure forever. This is not only a manifest contradiction of the plainest declarations of the Bible, in relation to the duration of Mercy, but violates all the instructions of the Scriptures and all conceptions of reason, in relation to the nature of God, and makes him a *changeable* being. If the Deity extends his Mercy over sinners for threescore years and ten, and then that Mercy is withheld, a change must necessarily have been effected in one of the parties. That the sinner has not changed, is very certain. He was a sinner before this withdrawal of Mercy, and is the same sinner afterwards. Hence the change must be in the Creator. Whereas he was merciful towards sinners at one time, at another period his Mercy is forever taken from them. In such a case, the change not being in the sinner, must have taken place in God. This theory is evidently erroneous. The inspired Word declares that "his tender mercies are over *all* his works," and that "his mercy endureth forever." It asserts, also, that Jehovah is immutable, unchangeable, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. If, then, the Mercy of the Lord embraces sinners at any period of their being, it must embrace them forever—it will never be withdrawn. And why should it? What reason can call for an exercise of God's Mercy towards sinners at one period of their existence, that does not call for it, with equal force, at any other period? Why should Mercy extend its pitiful arms around the wicked, and plead their cause in this world, and not in the next? They

can do nothing more to *merit* Mercy here, than hereafter. It is not because the sinner has any *merit*, but because he has *no* merit—not because he has done anything good, but has done that which is evil—not because he has any strength and ability to secure his permanent and everlasting good, but is feeble and helpless—not because he has any worthiness, but is unworthy; is, in fine, a *sinner*—that he is a legitimate object of Mercy. And as long as this state of things continues, i. e., as long as men are sinners, and are unable to earn eternal felicity, will they continue beings in behalf of whom Mercy can properly exert its influence. While sin exists, Mercy will have legitimate objects for its exercise—for it is sin and unworthiness, and helplessness only, that can give Mercy any opportunity to display its loveliness!

MERCY NOT OPPOSED TO JUSTICE.

The chief difficulty generally prevailing, which prevents consistent views of Mercy, is found in the supposition that it is the *antipodes*, the *antagonist* of Justice. It is believed that these two attributes are virtually at eternal variance—that it is impossible for God to be infinitely Merciful, without interfering with the awards of Justice, and violating its claims—and that he cannot allow all the demands of infinite Justice to be satisfied, without sternly repulsing the compassionate petitions of Mercy, and silencing its voice forever in heaven. Or, to speak more definitely in illustration of these erroneous

views, it is believed all mankind have merited, and actually deserve, endless punishment for the sins they commit, and that strict, even-handed Justice rightfully demands the infliction of this punishment. On the other hand, it is believed that Mercy raises its voice, and exerts all its influence, to prevent the fulfilment of this demand of Justice—that it intercedes to avert this sad doom which Justice would inflict upon man, and pleads with all its melting eloquence, that ignorant and sinful humanity may be rescued from the grasp of Justice, and raised to immortal bliss! What a spectacle must be exhibited in heaven, on the supposition that these views are correct! Two great advocates pleading in opposition to each other, in the Councils of the Most High, upon the infinitely momentous cause of man's everlasting destiny! Justice urging with all its power, that no mercy shall be extended to ignorant and frail sinners—and Mercy, with equal earnestness, beseeching that Justice shall be peremptorily silenced, and its claims on humanity be annulled forever. And man, the passive object of this "war in heaven," will be raised to a world of infinite joy, or hurled down to a hell of endless torment, as victory shall alight upon the standard of Mercy or Justice! It is very evident, if such a state of things did exist, that either one or the other of these attributes would be pleading that a great *wrong* might be done to man. If the human race *justly* deserve endless punishment, then it would manifestly be *right* to inflict it, and Mercy is pleading for a great wrong to exist, in opposing its infliction.

tion. If, on the contrary, Mercy can legitimately claim man, as a true object for its intercession, then it would be *right* for man to be saved from endless woe, and Justice is but urging for the committal of an infinite *wrong*, in demanding the infliction of such a punishment. If, again, the human race are legitimate subjects on which Justice and Mercy *both* have rightful claims, as they self-evidently are, then each of these attributes, in putting in *exclusive* and conflicting demands for the possession of man, would be contending for *wrong*!

SINGULAR ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE JUSTICE AND MERCY.

Singular as it may appear that sentiments should be entertained which involve the holder in conclusions so contradictory, yet the climax of absurdity on this subject is not attained, until we arrive at the strange method which it is supposed the Deity is compelled to adopt, to satisfy the claims of these antagonistic attributes. Beholding this contest between his Justice and Mercy, and being desirous to satisfy both, it is supposed the Creator finally determined to give up his own Son, (or rather *himself*, for it is contended, as a necessary part of this theory, that Christ is nothing less than the eternal God,) as a victim, to satisfy the infinite claims of Justice, and, at the same time, allow Mercy to have all its desires fulfilled. But, stranger still, it is believed even this Infinite Sacrifice has not healed the breach between Justice and Mercy. For Justice, notwithstanding it has had its victim—not-

withstanding its demands upon all the human race have been infinitely fulfilled by Christ, is not yet willing that Mercy should receive mankind to its embrace, and make them happy, but is still clamorous for the torment of human souls in an endless hell. And, strangest of all, it is believed that God gives way to these greedy and abhorrent hungerings for the blood of souls, and allows Justice, although now not possessing the slightest claim upon man, to sweep away by far the greater part of humanity to eternal agonies! Thus Justice, in being allowed to have its demands *doubly* satisfied, has been permitted to inflict an everlasting *cruelty* on helpless victims, while Mercy must fain content its infinitely yearning compassion, with comparatively a few of mankind, snatched fortunately from the rapacity of Justice!

How singular that notions of God and his attributes, so crude, so contradictory, so manifestly in opposition to all reason, should find a place in human belief. And yet they have passed current for truth, in the Christian church, for centuries. That such views do violence to the nature and claims of God's Justice, has already been shown in a previous chapter. And equally evident is it, that they impose a work on Mercy, which it never had a disposition to accomplish.

"They set at odds Heaven's jarring Attributes,
And with one excellence another wound."

ENDLESS PUNISHMENT NOT THE DEMAND OF JUSTICE.

The great error which leads to these unreasona-

ble conclusions, is the supposition that divine Justice demands the *endless* punishment of sinners. With this error, comes contradiction and confusion. It places the attributes of God in hostility to each other, and necessarily involves a violation of that harmonious action and unity among them, which we must believe to exist in the Infinite Mind. If such is indeed the demand of Justice—if it possesses a legitimate claim to the endless punishment of sinners—then all mankind must meet this doom, because all have sinned. In this case, every opportunity for the display of Mercy will be excluded, and this lovely attribute will forever be denied an occasion to discharge its delightful office. There would be no possible manner for Mercy to throw its benevolent arms around a soul of humanity, except in direct violation of the legitimate claims of Justice. And this the Holy One would never allow; for Justice—pure, uncontaminated, unadulterated Justice—is one of the chief pillars on which the moral integrity and purity of the divine government rests. Were God to permit the smallest tittle of the claims of infinite Justice to be unfulfilled—were he to allow any obstacle to interfere to prevent the full and perfect operation of this holy and salutary principle, the whole moral universe, at the head of which he stands, would be forever polluted with wrong. It may be depended upon, that Jehovah will never allow his Justice to be mitigated, palliated, or infringed upon, in the slightest degree, even at the expostulation and entreaty of Mercy, though all the other attributes joined in its peti-

tions. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne."¹ "He is excellent in power, and in judgment, and in *plenty* of justice."² Let it be repeated, that if eternal punishment is the *rightful* claim of Justice for the sins of men, then all men will become involved in its torments; and Mercy will not, and cannot, make any efforts to reach their case, or mitigate their ceaseless miseries in the slightest degree!

When this overshadowing error in regard to the claims of Justice is removed—when it is seen that Justice demands, not that men should be punished forever, but that every man shall be punished *according to his deeds*—when men will understand that the pure Justice of heaven calls for the infliction of penalty, not for the *injury* of the sinful, not on the principle of retaliation, or of rendering evil for evil, but for the *good* of the guilty, to *restore* them to spiritual soundness and health—then harmony is established in the divine councils; and abundant room and opportunity is found for the operation of Mercy, Goodness, and all the holy attributes, without conflict or confusion. Inasmuch as it is for the *benefit* of the sinful that Justice demands their punishment, Mercy makes no objection to its infliction, and would not prevent it if she could—because anything that is for the *good* of the guilty, accords fully with the desires of Mercy. And when Justice has had all its claims on the sinner amply fulfilled, and its work and office in regard to him accomplished, and he is discharged from its

¹ Ps. lxxxix. 14.

² Job xxxvii. 23.

high court, there is still in the case of every such sinner, an infinite field for the operation and work of divine Mercy. It is self-evident that all human beings formed by the Creator are, and forever must be, subject to the claims of both the Justice and Mercy of God. Justice will demand its *full dues* in the case of every individual, without exception; and Mercy will also forever claim them as proper objects over whom to throw its protecting ægis. Each of these attributes claim all created intelligences as theirs, to execute their particular office upon. God yields all his creatures up to these claims, and allows infinite Justice and infinite Mercy to execute their entire and perfect work upon them! And yet, to have correct views of the divine attributes, it is necessary to behold both Justice and Mercy moving on in their distinct spheres, with no curtailment, infringement, or clashing of claims.

DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUSTICE AND MERCY.

To perceive this beautiful truth, it will be necessary to understand the distinction between the offices of Justice and Mercy. Justice is the rendering unto every man his *dues*, according to his works. Mercy is the bestowment of benefits upon those who have not *merited* them, who have no right to *demand* them, and who have no *claim* upon the benefactor, but their want and feebleness. Justice *repays*—repays reward to those who merit it, and punishment to those who are deserving of it.

Mercy never repays, but *gives*. "Without money and without price," it bestows its favors. Benefits *merited*, are awarded by Justice—benefits *unmerited*, benefits where there is no ability to merit, and no power to repay, it is the office of Mercy to bestow. Claims upon Justice are *acquired*—claims upon Mercy are *unacquired*. The only legitimate claim a being can have upon Mercy, is *helplessness* and *wretchedness*! All claims except that of want and inability, are addressed to different and other attributes than Mercy.

ILLUSTRATION OF THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN JUSTICE
AND MERCY.

To illustrate this distinction. A man of wealth employs a neighbor who is poor and destitute, and who has a sick family in a suffering condition, to perform a certain amount of labor, at a stipulated price. When the labor is accomplished, the case is in the hands of Justice, who thus addresses the employer: "You have contracted to reward this poor man with a certain sum of money for the performance of his work. His labor is accomplished, the work is done, he has fulfilled his part of the contract. Pay him what thou owest." This is all the voice Justice has in the case. And when the employer pays the compensation promised, the claims of Justice are fulfilled—its scales are balanced—its connection with the affair ceases, and the case is dismissed from its court. Justice can demand no more for the laborer, than the stipulated compensa-

tion, however much he may *need* it. The whole case now properly comes into the sphere of Mercy. And Mercy appeals to the wealthy employer—"You are rich, and have more than enough of this world's goods to supply your necessities; but your laborer is poor and needy—his family are sick and destitute—his children are shivering with cold, their garments are tattered, and they cry for bread! I pray you, *give* him something above his just dues, for the relief of those dependent on him." This is Mercy's claim; and the employer, in complying with this appeal, extends mercy towards the laborer, and thus becomes both just and merciful. In this case, it will be perceived that Justice and Mercy have each discharged their distinct offices—have each had their claims fulfilled, without the slightest interference or clashing. And equally distinct is their work, yet equally harmonious is their action, in every transaction where their principles are involved, either in rewards or in punishments.

MERCY SAVES NOT FROM JUST PUNISHMENT.

One of the offices of God's Mercy, it is sometimes supposed, is to intercede and save man from *deserved* and *just* punishment. But slight reflection, however, is necessary to discover the error involved in this belief. When sinners are enduring the punishment which Justice demands, they cannot consistently call upon *Mercy* to intercede and procure a mitigation or suspension of that punishment. If such a call were to be made, Mercy could not

respond to it, because it would be an interference with the rights of Justice, a violation of its claims, and an obstacle to the accomplishment of that benefit which is the sole and constant aim of Justice in all its inflictions upon the guilty. If there are any circumstances in a given case, which properly call for *mitigation* or *suspension* of punishment, such mitigation or suspension is rendered on principles of Justice, and not of Mercy—it belongs to the punished by *right*, and not by *favor*.

PARDON FROM PUNISHMENT.

In human laws, pardon from punishment is not administered on a principle of Mercy, but of Justice. Such a pardon presupposes either some *error* in the original award of punishment, or some *merit* acquired by the criminal while enduring the sentence of the law. Pardon granted on either ground, would be an act of simple *justice*—the prisoner *deserves* it, and hence it is his, on the score of right; and Mercy, properly understood, has no connection with the transaction. If a pardon were granted to the condemned where there were no mitigating circumstances, and where the full weight of guilt, unrelieved by any merit, was resting upon him, then it would be granted on grounds of Mercy alone. Yet such a pardon, granted before punishment had accomplished its legitimate purposes, would be wrong, and manifestly unjust! Among men the pardoning power is intrusted to rulers, on the ground that all human laws are imperfect, and

imperfectly administered; that the innocent are liable to be wrongfully condemned, and that the punishments inflicted on the guilty may be improperly applied.

PARDON UNNECESSARY IN A PERFECT GOVERNMENT.

An imperfect government requires the power to *pardon* from punishment, to remedy its mistakes, and correct its erroneous administrations of Justice. But in an all-perfect government there can be no room, no call for the exercise of the pardoning power; because Justice will invariably be administered right at first—and hence there can be no mistakes to remedy afterwards. This view of pardon is taken by the most eminent jurists and law commentators.

Imperfection is not attached to the government of God. Hence Mercy is not exhibited by the great Judge of all, in the form of pardon from *merited* punishment. In heaven's government, there is no ignorance, no mistake, no improper infliction of penalty, and therefore there is no room and no need for the extension of pardon from punishment. In each case of guilt, the all-wise Judge is acquainted with every particular connected therewith—he knows the heart of the sinner—understands perfectly the amount of demerit involved in his crimes—and, under the light of this knowledge, he is capable of adapting the punishment, in the first instance, precisely to the given case, to the amount of guilt incurred, to the condition of the mind and heart of the culprit, and is able to temper its inten-

sity in any degree, to produce the renovation and amendment of the being involved therein. Where is there any room or need of pardon, or mitigation of punishment? It is evident, that in such circumstances, a pardon from punishment, so far from being an act of Mercy, would be a wrong and an evil.

JUSTICE DEMANDS THE CESSATION OF PUNISHMENT.

All the punishments of God are just. They are inflicted upon sinners in accordance to the amount of their guilt, and for the purpose of their restoration to virtue and righteousness. Mercy cannot desire to interfere to arrest a *just* punishment. There is no necessity for such a step. When the guilty have suffered chastisement to the amount demanded by Justice, it is not Mercy, but Justice itself, that calls for that punishment to cease. It would be as manifest a violation of Justice, to have the sinner afflicted with one pang of punishment, *beyond* his actual demerit, as it would to have him escape all penalty. Justice raises its voice as imperatively in demanding that punishment shall *cease*, when its claims have been fulfilled, as to have it commence in the first place. There is no occasion, therefore, for Mercy ever to call for a cessation of the penalties inflicted upon the transgressor. This belongs not to its office.

THE LEGITIMATE FIELD FOR MERCY.

Where, then, is there opportunity for God to display his attribute of Mercy? If sinners are pun-

ished to the full extent that Justice can claim, and their punishment is brought to a termination by the voice of Justice itself, how can the Creator have mercy on them?—and what need is there for the exercise of Mercy in such a case? In answer to these questions, let the condition of sinners in such circumstances, be inquired into. Have they any *claim* to the blessings of God, to the joys of heaven, simply on the ground that they have suffered all the punishment for their sins that Justice demands? What *merit* is there in enduring the penalty justly due their crimes? There can be none. It is but experiencing that chastisement which they *deserved* in consequence of wilful sins committed. At best they can then stand only on the ground they occupied before they incurred guilt. The fact that a culprit has served out his time in prison, does not entitle him to become an inmate of the family of the Judge who sentenced him, and to share in his property. But while the discharged criminal has no *claims* for these favors, if the Judge, moved by compassion for his destitute condition, and becoming interested in his welfare, is pleased to admit him to the enjoyments of his family circle, and even give him any amount of his possessions, it would be perfectly right for him so to do. And this would be not an act of Justice, but of legitimate Mercy. But the prisoner who should *claim* or expect these favors of the Judge, because he has endured his sentence, would be modest in his demands, in comparison with a sinner who *claims* or expects the joys of

heaven, in consequence of having endured all the punishment Justice demands for his wickedness.

When the sinful children of humanity have been punished to the full extent of the requirements of Justice, and the account of this great attribute stands balanced with them, and they are discharged from all its demands, this gives them no rightful claim to be raised to eternal happiness, neither does it entitle them to the interference of Mercy. But they are needy, helpless, perishing, and without divine assistance from above, they must fall into dark annihilation. It is this *helplessness*, this *utter want*, that makes them the legitimate objects of Mercy. And now, the way being clear, Justice having discharged its office in respect to every human being, Mercy finds an open field for its operations, and intercedes in behalf of humanity. Its sweet voice is heard in heaven in eloquent pleadings for the imperfect sons of earth. It beseeches that man, the unworthy child of God, who, although subjected to vanity and imperfection, still possesses undeveloped powers of the most valuable description, in the unfolding of which he can be made to rival the mental and moral perfections of angels, may be saved from sin and death, and led up to higher and brighter worlds, and to the enjoyment of infinite scenes of heavenly progression! And to these divine petitions, the Father of spirits listens with a consenting ear. He has no attribute that puts in an objection to this compassionate call of Mercy. Justice is satisfied, its books are balanced, and it joins harmoniously with Goodness,

and every holy impulse in favoring and sustaining the petition of Mercy. God *will answer* this petition. Mercy is his favorite attribute. "*He delighteth in mercy.*"¹

GOD'S MERCY A SURE FOUNDATION FOR HOPE.

The Mercy of God forms a consistent foundation, upon which the hope of immortal happiness can rest. Here hope finds a sure basis, not only for individual salvation, but for the salvation of the race. If the Mercy of God can legitimately extend to the salvation of one soul, it can to all souls. The only claim upon Mercy, being want and helplessness, and all men being equally needy, dependent and weak, in regard to immortality, all are therefore equally embraced in the work of infinite Mercy, and will experience the fruit of its divine intercessions. Mercy can make no distinction among those who alike need its offices of love. This would be in violation of its own nature. "His tender mercies are over *all* his works." To suppose God will have mercy upon one portion of his creatures, and not upon another, even though one part is less sinful than the other, is to contradict the promptings of Mercy, and to confound together the different offices of the attributes. If any part of mankind have claims to superior benefits or to rewards, in consequence of meritorious deeds, these claims cannot be addressed to Mercy, nor can they influence this

¹ Micah vii. 18.

attribute to bestow upon them a monopoly of its blessings. All such claims are directed to Justice—and Justice will reward them fully. If any man can *merit* the eternal joys of heaven by his conduct upon the earth, then those joys will be imparted to him, on the score of *justice* alone. Mercy bestows favors that *cannot be reached* as rewards. Its work *commences* where that of Justice *terminates*; and it lavishes gifts upon humanity that never can be earned or merited. The Scriptures, as well as the sober deductions of reason, declare that man cannot *earn*, or become *worthy* in consequence of his deeds in this life, the endless felicity of heaven. “By grace [free gift—mercy] are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift [mercy] of God: not of works, [not by the rewards of Justice,] lest any man should boast.”¹ In this passage it is declared unequivocally, that salvation is not to be given as a reward for works, but that it is a free gift, an unpurchased bestowment of Mercy, from God. And from the impartiality of his nature, a gift so beyond all merit, all earning, if bestowed upon one of his creatures, will be bestowed on all.

CORROBORATED BY THE SCRIPTURES.

The principles advanced in these positions, are clearly recognized in the language of the prophet—“For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with *great mercies* will I gather thee. In a little

¹ Eph. ii. 8, 9.

wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."¹ To describe the movements of God's providence, the prophet selects such language as, while it states true principles, is at the same time accommodated to the appearances presented to man, especially in the age when it was written. And although its original and direct application is to the Jews, yet it develops the principles upon which Jehovah deals with all his wayward creatures—for the impartial Father of spirits exercises the same government over his offspring among all nations, and in every age. "For a small moment have I forsaken thee. * * * * In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment." When man is enduring that punishment for his sins, which a just Providence invariably brings upon the transgressor, it appears as though his heavenly Parent had hid his face from him and forsaken him. And many, deceived by appearances, and mistaking the character of God and the objects of punishment, believe, and contend, and teach, that Jehovah does actually and forever forsake his creatures, when the time comes for the infliction of punishment. But a greater error could not be fallen into. It is but "for a small moment," comparatively, that the Creator and the creature stand in this relation towards each other. It is only while even-handed, pure-hearted Justice is inflicting those stripes which the good of the sinner demands, and

¹ Isa. liv. 7, 8.

which are essential to bring him to repentance and purification, that the Father seemingly "hides his face" from him. "Your *iniquities* have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." But this state of things is not eternal. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither is his ear heavy, that he cannot hear."¹ When Justice has accomplished its ends—when punishment has yielded its legitimate and desired fruit—then all the clouds of error and irreconciliation, which have hung over the horizon of the sinner's sight, and hid the face of the Most High, are scattered away, and the lovely form of Mercy is revealed, extending its compassionate arms to raise frail humanity from its subjection to imperfection and sin. Then "with great mercies will I gather thee"—then "with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer."

UNIVERSALITY OF GOD'S MERCY.

The universality of the Mercy of God is made evident, not only from the impartiality of his nature, but from the explicit declarations of his holy Word. It is declared that "his tender mercies are over all his works." Blessed truth! The great Jehovah—the independent, the all-powerful God—who is abundantly able to accomplish his will, and

¹ Isa. lix. 1, 2.

to gratify every impulse of his holy nature, and who possesses infinite resources wherewith to bless the objects of his regard—extends his Mercy over all! He delights to bestow blessings on all his creatures, far above their deserts—to visit those who are poor, and needy, and helpless, who can urge no worthiness acquired amid their imperfections, who have no claim upon the boundless riches of his grace, and pour out upon them the inexhaustible floods of his Mercy! He will do this *for his own pleasure*, as well as for the good of his creatures. For

————— “Mercy is *twice* blessed;
It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.”

When the scripture writers declare that God’s “tender mercies are over all his works,” they do not use an empty form of words. Every letter is full of infinite meaning. They would have the world understand and believe, that each creature ushered into existence—every beast, bird, creeping thing, the insect that floats upon a sunbeam, the animalcule that sports in a dew-drop—and especially man, formed in the image of his Creator—is surrounded by the unpurchased Mercy of the Eternal. And that Mercy, they would have us realize, is a *tender* Mercy—is full of utmost pity and compassion—overflowing with boundless kindness and love for the weak and dependent race of man! This Mercy “endureth forever!” It knows no diminution, no change, no faltering, no end. While the throne of Omnipotent Love shall stand, this tender Mercy shall enfold humanity in its sweet embrace! Ex-

alted and cheering truth. Who, that has felt the promptings of Mercy in his own soul, can doubt it? Who can believe the Creator and Father of all, with this infinite and tender spirit of Mercy pervading his nature, and influencing to every blessed deed, will ever turn upon his offspring and rend them with eternal agonies? Who can believe that he will allow any soul he has formed, to stray away so far into sin and ignorance, as to be beyond the reach of that boundless Mercy which yearns with pity for the degraded, and that Arm omnipotent, which is stretched out to save to the uttermost?

The scripture writers evidently had lofty and extended conceptions of the Mercy of the Most High, and looked upon it as his favorite attribute. They never say that God delights in Wisdom, or Power, or Justice; but they are careful to declare that "he delighteth in Mercy!"

"What most thy name must elevate,
Is that thou art a God of love;
And Mercy is the central sun
Of all thy glories joined in one."

That his pleasure in the activity of this attribute, is of the most boundless extent, is made evident by the declaration of the Psalmist, above quoted, that "his tender mercies are over *all* his works."¹ Unless there is a member of the human race, who is not the workmanship of God, then there is not one but what is embraced in his Mercy. Not embraced for a short period, and then excluded forever after. This

¹ Ps. cxlv. 9.

would make the Mercy of God of a very brief duration; whereas the Bible declares, and reiterates emphatically, in a multitude of instances, that "the mercy of the Lord endureth *forever!*" All "the works" of God, all human beings, will therefore be forever the recipients of his "tender mercies." But this question is cleared of all doubt, and placed beyond the reach of cavil, by the singularly plain and emphatic language of St. Paul—"God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might HAVE MERCY UPON ALL!!"¹ This declaration scatters all the clouds of unbelief which can possibly surround this great doctrine of boundless Mercy, and reveals it to the most feeble vision and faithless heart, by the flashings of the concentrated rays of divine truth directly upon it. The holy One included all his offspring in unbelief, that he might have an opportunity to experience the infinite pleasure of having *mercy* upon all! Well may the Apostle, with his mind illuminated with the heavenly light of this glorious truth, and soaring up to survey the boundless and infinite fulness of its promised blessings, break forth in heavenly rapture—"O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

GOD DELIGHTS IN MERCY.

"He delighteth in mercy,"² exclaims the prophet. This declaration contains a truth which is of no slight importance. That the words of Micah can

¹ Rom. xi. 32.

² Micah vii. 18.

be relied upon—that God actually experiences *delight* in the exercise of Mercy—will not be questioned by any man who himself possesses a benevolent and merciful spirit. This position may, indeed, be doubted by an individual having an opposite disposition. A person whose feelings are hardened and soured—who has little or no sympathy for his fellow-man—who is a stranger to the promptings of compassion—whose heart is unsusceptible to pure and gentle impressions—and who is so wrapped up in himself, that he is indifferent to the weal or woe that attends his brother man—may question whether Deity will exercise Mercy to any extent, and doubt especially whether God *delights* in Mercy. Judging the Creator by himself, he cannot comprehend how Jehovah can find any enjoyment in extending Mercy to frail and erring creatures. He feels it to be a greater delight to his own soul, to inflict *revenge* upon his enemies—to gratify the passions of hatred and malice—and to injure and afflict those who have offended him—than to indulge a *weak* feeling of pity and mercy towards them. There are not a few even among professing Christians, who are in this predicament—who are apparently skeptical as to any particular enjoyment to be derived from an exercise of the finer emotions of the soul, and who actually doubt whether it is proper to give way to their promptings. It is not unfrequently contended that compassion for the distressed is a human *weakness*, and that it is improper and unmanly to cherish it to any great extent—or at least to draw any conclusion from its promptings in our own hearts, as to

its influence upon the Most High! But how little can they know of the true nature of Mercy, or of the spirit of God. Mercy a *weakness*! So far from this, it is the highest and purest moral principle in the human soul. It forms one of the chief distinctions between mankind and the brute world. A feeling of pity or mercy towards the distressed and helpless, is an emotion which animals are incapable of experiencing. This is a moral trait which characterizes the loftiest grades of beings, and constitutes their highest excellency. There is no action conceivable which approaches nearer the sublime height of *moral perfection*, than compassion for the weak and suffering. Mercy is the loveliest attribute of the Most High—it forms the brightest ray in the halo of God's glory. And the man who is the most merciful, acts the most like God. Can that be *weakness* in human beings, which constitutes the most attractive and valuable trait in the Divine Nature? We are commanded by the Saviour to imitate God in the exhibition of Mercy—"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." Would the Redeemer have called upon his followers to exercise Mercy, if it is but a *human weakness*?

GOD'S MORAL QUALITIES TO BE JUDGED BY MAN'S.

In revealing himself unto his creatures through the Scriptures, God has made use of such expressions, such forms of speech, and descriptions as they would best understand. In portraying his attributes he has been particular to represent them by the

names of certain emotions and faculties which man feels in his own mind, so that we need not mistake as to his meaning. And in perusing these descriptions of the nature of God, we should give them the meaning which accords the most perfectly with the prompting of the same principles in our own souls. Hence, when we read that God is good or just, we must understand that he possesses moral characteristics similar to those we see manifested by man, and those we also feel influencing our hearts, and which we call goodness or justice. If the Creator did not design man thus to judge of the meaning of his language, then he has made no revelation to the world, the Bible is written in an "unknown tongue," and the human race are still in total ignorance of the character of Jehovah! The same rule of judging as above described, must be observed in relation to all the attributes of Deity. When the Bible declares that Mercy is one of the perfections of God, if we would obtain any true idea from the language, we must understand it as asserting that in the nature of the Most High, there exists in infinite fulness and immutable perfection, an emotion similar to that which is experienced by man when his soul yearns with pity and compassion toward some helpless being plunged in pain and wretchedness, and when he feels an impulse he cannot resist, to fly to his succor and relief. And when the Bible further declares that God *delights* in Mercy, we can draw no other meaning than that it affords *infinite pleasure* to the Father of spirits to rescue, and raise up, and bless the weak, wretched, sinful creatures of his hand.

It is true there is a distinction between the mercy of man and the Mercy of God. But it is a distinction in *degree* and not in *nature*. In both, the principle is the same; but in man it is finite, while in God it is infinite; in man it is exhibited imperfectly, being modified and biassed by the various and conflicting passions of the body, but in God it is manifested in the utmost perfection and fulness, deriving aid, coöperation and sympathy, as it does, from all the other attributes in the divine character. The highest idea of the distinction between the Mercy of God and man, to which the meagreness of human language will allow utterance to be given, is that the mercy of the most compassionate, generous, tender-hearted individual that the world has ever known, and all the good deeds which that mercy has led him to do for the wretched, sinks from the sight and fades away, as it were, into nothing, in comparison with the tenderness, the fulness, perfection, boundlessness and immutability, of the Mercy of God, and the blessings which will flow from that Mercy to the sinful race of man !

GOD'S DELIGHT IN MERCY UNDERSTOOD BY THE GOOD
MAN.

While the cold-hearted and selfish man doubts as to enjoyment being derived from the exercise of the pure and heavenly emotions of compassion, and gives but little weight to the Bible assertion that God *delights* in Mercy, the whole subject presents a different aspect to him whose soul is pervaded with

the heaven-born principles of goodness and pity. He is not astonished that the Creator derives *delight* from the display of Mercy. From a happy experience he has learned that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." He has found that in cherishing the principle of compassion, and following out its promptings—in seeking the needy, the helpless, the wretched, and giving them relief—in raising up and comforting the sons and daughters of want and misery—he has realized the purest and sweetest delights of his existence. He has learned that in every act of relief prompted by pity for the miserable, he has made himself even more happy than the objects of his compassion. Finding this pleasure, this rich reward, in the exercise of Mercy in his own case, he can well believe the words of revelation that "God *delighteth* in mercy." He can appreciate the truthfulness of this language—he can understand how it is that the great Jehovah finds one of the chief sources of his pleasure, in stooping down from his high throne, and giving free and full exercise to the promptings of his infinite Mercy towards the erring and perishing creatures he has formed!

MERCY'S DESIRES SATISFIED.

In the important and well-established truth, that God delights in Mercy, is found the most conclusive evidence that he will exercise this emotion to the fullest extent. Each attribute of Jehovah, being infinite in its resources, will not cease its operations nor be satisfied with the condition of things, until

it has accomplished all its nature prompts,—i. e., until it beholds every desirable work completed for man that comes within its particular sphere. Goodness will continue its work until there is naught but good in the universe—Justice will exert its powers, until its claims are all fulfilled, and its divine principles are established in every intelligent soul. And Mercy will never have its yearnings gratified and its labors accomplished, while there is a being in creation who needs its kind offices! Hence to have Mercy's work all done, and its wishes fully gratified, it must be extended to every child of humanity. Less than this cannot satisfy *infinite* Mercy. It may be said, there can be no delight in having mercy on depraved and wicked creatures. Let those who entertain this thought, listen to the language addressed to them by the Son of God—"Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice."¹ Go ye and learn that if men were not sinful and wretched, they would not need Mercy! Can that sinfulness which alone calls for Mercy, be an insurmountable obstacle to the display of Mercy? But some may add, it would not be *right* to extend Mercy to the sinful and ignorant. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" Who art thou that enterest thy objections against the Holy One for doing that in which he takes delight? Is he not the Author of all things? Has he not the right to fulfil his own pleasure, and to gratify

¹ Matthew ix. 13.

the promptings of his own holy and perfect attributes? Art thou not also a sinner—and dost thou not thus cut off thine own hopes of Mercy? But why would it not be right for the Creator to extend Mercy towards the sinful—yea, towards the whole race of man? Would it be because some are more worthy than others? This objection cannot be valid; because, for any superior degree of worthiness one individual may possess above another, he is amply and abundantly rewarded by Justice—and having been thus once repaid for his worthiness, it can give him no exclusive claim to Mercy, above any other fellow-being. No consistent man can demand or expect to be *doubly* rewarded for any excellency he may manifest. It is Justice, and not Mercy, as already shown, that rewards, repays, blesses, for whatever good deeds men may do. Mercy's favors cannot be *earned*—they are *gifts*, free, unbought, unmerited. Hence all men are equally the subjects of her smiles. Or if there are distinctions, those who are the most blind, and sinful, and helpless, are the most proper objects for Mercy's gifts, because they *need* them the most. It would, therefore, not only be right to exercise Mercy towards the sinful, but all being on a level as to ability to earn it, *impartiality* demands that it shall be extended alike to all. And rest assured, the Almighty will pay no heed to the objections and fault-findings of cold, unconverted hearts. He will continue to exercise his prerogative as Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and do that in which he delighteth. “For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I

will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy."¹

GOD WILL NOT DEPRIVE HIMSELF OF THAT WHICH GIVES DELIGHT.

To exercise Mercy affords *delight* to the Almighty! Think of this truth, dear reader. Reflect that a being whose sources of pleasure are infinite and exhaustless, still finds an added delight in extending Mercy to erring man! How pure, how holy, exalted, lovely, precious, must be an emotion thus capable of imparting renewed enjoyments to Jehovah! Shall such a principle remain dormant in the divine nature, when the endless happiness of a race is dependent upon its active exercise? Shall it cease its work when it has, comparatively, but just commenced? Shall it confine its operations to a small circle, when there are boundless fields where it can legitimately and rightfully extend its blessed influences? Can Mercy, whose whole nature is to pity and yearn over the fallen and helpless, satisfy all its longings, in carrying succor and deliverance to a small fragment of the sinful race of man, while the great mass of humanity stretch forth their hands towards her and beseech her assistance? And moreover, will the Father of spirits *deprive* himself of that in which he delights? Will he cramp down to narrow paths, the movements of his Mercy, when

¹ Romans ix. 15, 16.

there is a universe throughout which it can go forth, carrying light and joy, smiles and blessings, to all created beings, and returning with new delights to its divine Author? From the vast ocean of *infinite* Mercy, will God only allow himself the delight of permitting a few sparse drops to fall upon his earthly creatures, when it can send forth broad and deep rivers, whose swelling floods can flow to the widest verge of man's sinful wanderings? Will he deny himself the privilege of conferring the benefits of such a display of Mercy upon his creatures, and of furnishing this infinite delight to himself?

Inasmuch as the Deity delights in Mercy, it is evident his delight is magnified in the same proportion that he exercises this attribute, and lessened in the same ratio as he seals up the channels of Mercy. Hence if the exercise of Mercy is limited to a number less than the whole race of humanity, the delight experienced by the Creator in its display, must be vastly less than if it were extended to the entire family of man! To have his delight complete and perfect, his Mercy must reach every case of sin, and ignorance, and suffering, in the universe, and restore to purity, knowledge and bliss! That this position is well-grounded, and that Jehovah has determined to have the delight of extending Mercy to all mankind, is placed beyond the reach of question by the word of revelation, which cannot be too frequently quoted—"God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have *mercy* upon *all*!" Gracious assurance, lovely truth! Behold, how brightly it breaks through the dark clouds of

man's unbelief, and sends its sweet and heavenly light upon the doubting and troubled soul!

"But above all, in her own light arrayed,
See Mercy's grand apocalypse displayed!"

VALUE OF THE HUMAN SOUL.

A want of a proper estimation of the *value* of the human soul has caused many to be led more readily into error in regard to the extent of divine Mercy. How coolly multitudes will contend for the everlasting wretchedness of their fellow-beings! With what *nonchalance* they will speak of the infinite torment of the soul of a deceased neighbor, as though it were of no more value than the life of an insect! With what composure, and ease, and comfort, they will rest under the belief that souls more numerous than leaves upon the trees of the forest, will be plunged into utter despair, and writhe in unmitigated agonies forever! This awful indifference is to be attributed, not so much to a deadness of the better sensibilities of the heart, and an absence of that sympathizing love for humanity which heaven commands us to cherish, as to the lack of a due realization of the worth of the soul of man. Let them reflect upon the endowments and capacities of the soul. It has capabilities for the attainment of knowledge to an almost infinite extent. Give it but the opportunity and the facilities, and it will ascend the vast scale of attainable wisdom, to a height rivaling even the angels of heaven! And its moral capacities! What extent of goodness—what depths

of benevolence—what heights and lengths of love and kindness, of righteousness and purity—what displays of affection, benevolence, charity, compassion, and all conceivable virtues—has not the human soul manifested in this imperfect world? This display demonstrates the inherent moral *capabilities* of all souls. For the same original germs of moral ability are implanted in every intelligent creature. And how vastly may these excellences be magnified under the more favorable influences of a higher state of existence. Are not souls possessing these capabilities, of immense value? What is there in all the material universe that can compare in worth, with the soul of even one of the most ignorant and sinful of men?

"Know'st thou the importance of a soul immortal?
Behold this midnight glory: worlds on worlds!
Amazing pomp! Redouble this amaze;
Ten thousand add; and twice ten thousand more;
Then weigh the whole: one soul outweighs them all;
And calls the astonishing magnificence
Of unintelligent creation poor."

* * * * *

This immeasurable value of the souls of human beings, must not be overlooked in understanding the dealings of God. Neither is the subject of their immortal destiny to be trifled with, nor lightly or hastily decided. That the Creator of such souls must entertain a high estimation of their worth, and a deep interest in their everlasting welfare, who can doubt? And who can wonder that, when, in the exercise of an endowment so high and peculiar as

moral freedom, in the midst of a world full of temptations, a soul falls into sin and darkness, for a season, the Holy One delights to extend towards it the embrace of infinite Mercy, restore it to purity, and place it in a world where it shall have an opportunity to go on in endless progression, enlarging its capacities, and developing all its inherent capabilities! "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?"¹ If the Creator remembers the little sparrow—if he has compassion on the meanest insect he has formed, and supplies all it wants during the whole period of its existence, will he do less for each soul formed in his own image? Will he do less for beings possessing capabilities so valuable, and destined to exist forever? Who can entertain a doubt on this point?

GOD'S ESTIMATION OF THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

There are not wanting the most abundant indications of the value which the Creator places upon the souls of men. In the provisions he has made for the sustenance, the comfort, the improvement of mankind in the present world—in his willingness to reveal himself unto his creatures, and to instruct them in heavenly truth and wisdom—in sending his Son to endure the trials of earthly life, and to shed his blood on Calvary for the redemption of a world—we behold how precious the soul of man is in his sight.

¹ Luke xii. 6.

* * * "The soul's high price
Is writ in all the conduct of the skies;
The soul's high price is the creation's key,
Unlocks its mysteries, and naked lays
The genuine cause of every deed divine."

After having created the soul in his own image—after having endowed it with faculties so high and valuable—after having in so many ways showed the deepest interest in its welfare—after having made it the object of his care, his protection, his love, through life,—will God permit it at death to pass beyond the reach of his Mercy, and fall into eternal darkness and ruin? The teachings of the Scriptures, the dictates of reason, and the voice of nature, all unite in exclaiming, Impossible! Impossible!!

GLORIOUS CONCLUSIONS FROM THE MERCY OF GOD.

The views of the Mercy of God, advanced in this Argument, bring us to legitimate conclusions, which accord with the holiest wishes of the Christian's heart, and agree with the dictates of unbiassed reason. It is under the light of these views only, that man is enabled to conceive of harmony and unity in Jehovah's councils. It is under their light only, that Justice and Mercy are removed from their *antagonistic* attitude, and made to meet and "kiss each other," and go together, hand in hand, in all the movements of a wonder-working Providence. Here alone Justice is granted *all* its dues—here alone Mercy has its every impulse *completely* gratified—here alone all the attributes perform their allotted office, without obstruction, or interference, or failure! Blessed harmony—holy agreement!

Worthy a perfect God—ininitely worthy the Father of spirits! O, the bright and blissful prospect of the future, which is unveiled to the eye of faith, in this heavenly system! Justice abundantly satisfied—Mercy exulting in the infinite gratification of its desires—the law of God obeyed and loved, by every intelligent being—the ways of Providence vindicated, and seen to have ever been in accordance with infinite Wisdom—the great family of man purified, sanctified, and saved—Justice, Mercy, Goodness, Truth, triumphant over all sin, cruelty, evil, and error—the great God of heaven honored in his attributes, in his works, his ways, and infinitely glorified in the infinite glory, holiness and bliss of his intelligent creation!! My soul soars far away, in delighted survey of this blessed hope—it ascends up, high and higher yet!—beholding no bound nor limit to the still enlarging expanse of grace, until it becomes bewildered in the very immensity of Good, which the God of all has prepared for his creatures! Gladly and joyfully does it join in the divine strain of the Psalmist—"Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that made us, and not we ourselves: we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his Mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations."¹

¹ Ps. c. 1—5.

ARGUMENT VI.

THE WILL OF GOD.

"And yet thy kindness deigns to show
Enough for mortal minds to know:
While Wisdom, Goodness, Power divine,
Through all thy works and conduct shine;
O, may our souls with rapture trace
Thy works of Nature and of Grace;
Explore thy sacred Truth, and still
Press on to know and do thy Will."

THE WILL OF GOD A COMBINATION OF HIS ATTRIBUTES.

IN former chapters we have examined what may be considered the prominent attributes of the Deity—viz., his Goodness, Wisdom, Power, Justice and Mercy. Although the Will of God cannot be considered an attribute, yet as its existence in the Divine Mind depends entirely upon the consent and coöperation of all his attributes, and is indeed the fruit of such a coöperation, it may legitimately claim our attention in this series of Arguments.

Will or Determination is created by a harmonious combination of the faculties of the mind in regard to any given subject. Without such combination it is impossible that any Will, properly speaking, can be formed. This is the origin of Will in man, and it may consistently be believed that the Will of

God is formed in a similar manner. The Creator does not Will or Determine to perform any action at the prompting of a single attribute, without the consent of the remainder. A Will formed in such a manner, would be of a character exceedingly weak, inefficient, and fruitless. No one attribute alone, and no partial combination of attributes, can command and bring into action all the energies and resources of Omnipotence. Were Justice, for instance, to demand a course of procedure in regard to man, that Goodness or Wisdom would not consent to, it could not call to its aid the entire Power of the Most High. Wisdom and Goodness would forbid and restrain the exercise of that Power—there would be division and distraction in the councils of heaven—which could but result in inefficiency and disappointment. Or if it were possible, on the other hand, that Goodness or Mercy were to require that which Justice could not consent to, the same division would accrue, and the same result follow. It is, thence, a matter self-evident, that the unanimous acquiescence and coöperation of all the attributes is requisite, in order that the Deity may form a definite and efficient Will. And equally evident is it that this harmony does actually exist in regard to every subject on which God forms a Will.

MAN'S WILL COMPARED WITH THE WILL OF GOD.

It is very certain that man's Will is subject to great imperfection, both in regard to its composition and its efficiency. It is sometimes formed under

the influence of blind passion—in hot haste, before the reflective powers have an opportunity to deliberate and decide upon the propriety of the procedure—and when put into immediate execution, often produces results the most disastrous. But when a Will thus formed, is delayed in its execution, and there is opportunity for all the faculties of the mind to come into deliberate action upon the case, the original Will is often much modified in its character, and not unfrequently entirely abandoned. The amount and character of the influence which the reflective faculties exert upon the Will, depends altogether upon their cultivation, and the degree of light and purity which they possess. Great ignorance, united to strong passions, renders the Will but a blind determination, to which the higher powers of the mind, from their weakness and darkness, present but very little opposition, and upon which they can effect but trifling modification. Man's Will is also frequently formed under the influence of erroneous views, and unsound premises. These may hold out a false light to the mental and moral powers, and *deceive* them into an approbation, which would not have been yielded had they possessed a perfect understanding of the case. Thus the Will of man is not only imperfect in its nature, but from this very imperfection, it is uncertain of execution. Sometimes it is wholly frustrated—at other times it is but partially fulfilled—and occasionally only, completely accomplishes its object.

But none of these imperfections can reasonably be supposed to be attached to the Will of God.

There is no rashness, no passion, no inconsiderate haste, no blind impulse, in the nature of the Most High, to enter into the composition of his Will. Neither is it possible for that Will to be formed on any misapprehension of facts, false premises, erroneous suppositions, or unfounded expectations. His Will must be created by the calm, enlightened and legitimate action of all his attributes. Each prompting its own natural suggestion, and contributing its proper quota, and all meeting and mingling harmoniously together, upon any given project, they form that distinct, enlightened and holy Purpose or Determination, which is denominated his Will.

THE ATTRIBUTES CONSENT TO MAN'S CREATION.

In illustration of the combination of the attributes in forming God's Will, we may look at it, in regard to the creation of the human family. It may rationally be conjectured that the Infinite Goodness of God first *prompted* the thought of creating a race of intelligent beings, whose existence should commence on the earth, and continue through eternity. In suggesting this work, the attribute of Goodness had no other design, but to produce beings so circumstanced that they would be legitimate objects towards whom it could gratify the delightful promptings of its own nature, by showering blessings and favors, in boundless and endless profusion, upon them all. It would be totally in contradiction to its nature, to prompt to creation with any different motive. This benevolent and lovely suggestion

of God's great moral attribute of Goodness, so consonant with its nature, and so worthy of its character, was then submitted, it may be supposed, to the unclouded eye, and the mature investigation, of infinite Wisdom. This scrutiny was purely a mental one—as Wisdom is solely an intellectual faculty. It took into consideration, not the right or wrong of the proposed undertaking, but simply its *practicability*—looked into the nature of the case—scrutinized all its bearings, from the beginning to the consummation—saw and examined every possible obstacle that would, or could, intervene to retard or prevent the completion of the design—beheld the relapse of man into sin, and the ways and means by which this moral malady could be healed, and humanity restored to purity. If in this examination, the Wisdom of God discovered any obstacle whatever, that could intervene and *prevent* the consummation of the design of Goodness in regard to a single human being—if it saw that in any case, and through any cause, creatures whom Goodness desired to exist that they might become the happy recipients of its blessings, would finally be involved in everlasting despair and wretchedness—if it perceived that through the imperfections, frailties, ignorance or blindness, incident to the incipient stage of their existence passed on the earth, they would fall into a state of sin and alienation, from which nothing could relieve or save them—then infinite Wisdom would not have yielded its assent to the proposition of Goodness. It would have said emphatically—“It cannot be done! However much Goodness

may desire the creation of beings to be happy forever, it is impossible for such a plan to be carried into effect! Millions will fall into wretchedness without end; and no scheme I can devise, can possibly save them from that doom, or avert their awful fate!" Such would have been the decision of Wisdom, provided it had foreseen that these obstacles to the accomplishment of the desires of Infinite Goodness, would intervene. And this decision would have prevented the creation of man. For it cannot be supposed that the Deity would form a Will to do that from which his Wisdom dissents, and which, indeed, it peremptorily declares cannot be done. Goodness itself would have objected to the creation of man, as decidedly as Wisdom, when it became assured that such creation would result in the infinite misery of a part, or even of one soul of humanity. Hence in case Wisdom had foreseen these disastrous results, (as it inevitably must if they ever can occur,) the human race would have been allowed to sleep on forever in the unconscious repose of nonentity.

WISDOM DECIDES ITS PRACTICABILITY.

But if Wisdom, in scrutinizing the plan of man's creation, from the first movement to the final consummation, saw no insurmountable obstacles—or if, in other words, Wisdom, in glancing through all the operations necessary to produce the final result designed by Goodness, saw that mankind could be formed rational and moral beings—saw they could

be endowed with a good degree of freedom of action, and intrusted with a wide sphere of self-control—and although in the imperfect exercise of this freedom, through the ignorance and imperfection which is incident to their early existence, they generally, and to a greater or less extent, would give way to temptation and fall into sin—yet that from this subjection to sin they could all be delivered, with souls strengthened, enlarged and enlightened, by the moral discipline through which they will have passed, and brought up to higher and happier stages of existence, where Infinite Goodness could forever pour out the full tide of its blessings upon all, with no sin, no evil, no pain, in the universe, to interrupt the general harmony and felicity—if Wisdom foresaw that all this could be done, then it would yield its full and free assent to the prompting of God's Goodness, and uniting with that attribute, would exclaim—"Let man be created!"

JUSTICE WEIGHS THE MORAL CHARACTER OF THE
TRANSACTION.

The union and assent, however, of both Goodness and Wisdom, would be insufficient for God to form his infinite Will to create man. Another attribute—Justice—must have a voice in this infinitely momentous question. Justice would take into consideration the *right* or the *wrong* of the transaction. If the proposition was to create a race of beings without allowing them the exercise of choice, either as to the description of creatures they should be

formed, or the circumstances under which they should exist, or the kind of world or worlds which they should inhabit—and while denying them all choice, all part or lot in the decision of these (to them) unspeakably important matters, to go on and create them frail, ignorant, erring beings, with bodies filled with passions liable to lead them to sin, and place them in a world full of temptations to excite these passions to sinful excess—and then, because they do fall into sin, plunge them into torments that shall endure as long as eternity, with no efforts to their reformation, except such as can be made in the brief period of threescore and ten years; and all this, too, while clearly foreseeing from the commencement, that precisely such would be the result of the existence of these creatures—if such were the proposition submitted to Justice, it would indignantly render its response—"No! I cannot consent to such a plan! So far from being *right*, it would be the concentrated essence of everything *wrong, evil and cruel!*" If Justice were not to return such a reply, it would deny its own nature, and become infinitely *unjust* to the prompting of its own eternal principles of *right!* But being a principle of even-handed equity and right, such would have been its answer. And hence, the attribute of Justice dissenting, no Will could have been formed in the divine Mind, to create the human family.

But if the design was of a different description—if it was proposed in the councils of heaven, to create mankind frail and subject to evil and sin,

and yet endowed with faculties in the exercise of which, in due season, they all would, under the wise supervision and action of God's righteous laws, be brought up to more perfect scenes of existence, where they should participate forever in happiness, the enjoyment of which during a single hour would more than compensate them for all the evils necessarily incident to their earthly subjection to imperfection—then Justice would freely yield its assent to the plan, and would exclaim—"I consent—be it done!"

THE ASSENT OF MERCY.

The elements for a Will in God, to create the human race, would, however, be still imperfect. Mercy, the radiance of whose countenance sheds the brightest and sweetest light upon the happy dwellers in heaven, must have a voice in this momentous plan. Had it been the design submitted for its sanction, to have formed mankind under such circumstances, that through any cause whatever—whether by the rigid and stern determination and purpose of God, or by the operation of any responsibility or action in the creature—a portion would fall into "the blackness of darkness forever," it would never have yielded its consent to the project! "Why create at all," it would exclaim, "under such circumstances? Why persist in urging unconscious beings into existence, when it is so well seen and known, that after a few brief years, they will be plunged into torments and agonies that shall never cease? Why not allow those whose creation would

terminate thus awfully, to repose forever in blank nonentity? Can unformed and unconscious beings have offended Infinite Malignity, that they must be accursed into such an existence, and to such a doom? I object! I declare against it! Before all heaven—before the Universe—I record my solemn, my eternal Protest in opposition to the cruel design!" If there is a principle of Mercy in the Most High, such we may believe, would have been its course, had it been possible that such a proposition could have been submitted to it. To have willed then, to form man under these circumstances, would have been an impossibility, even in God; because the attributes *must* all harmonize before a definite and effective Will can be formed.

On the other hand, if it had been proposed to usher into being a race of humanity, which, after having been carried through various mutations, and numerous stages of existence—after having been subject to all the claims of infinite Justice, both in the punishments it inflicts and rewards it bestows—should each receive the *gift* of immortal felicity—then Mercy could legitimately and joyfully yield its consent to man's existence. All it could desire for sentient beings would be insured and confirmed, and it would rejoice that countless multitudes were to be formed, around whom it could throw its loving embrace forever!

POWER ABLE TO EXECUTE.

The attributes of God, thus meeting and uniting harmoniously, in relation to the nature, the circum-

stances and the result of man's creation—Goodness prompting that the race should be formed for universal and endless felicity—Wisdom deciding that it is feasible, and devising ways and means to accomplish it—Justice approving it as right and good—and Mercy gladly consenting for so new and wide a field for the display of its divine gifts—this union produces a *Will*, a *Determination*, in Jehovah to put the glorious plan into execution—and Omnipotent Power is abundantly able to carry it forward to a triumphant and happy consummation!

In this manner, or in a way something similar to this, it may be conceived the attributes of God were combined in the formation of a Will to create man, provided the Deity had any definite Will in relation to the matter. And it cannot be supposed he would engage in a work so unspeakably important as the ushering of innumerable multitudes of sentient beings into endless existence, without some definite Will in regard to them. To believe he commenced such a work without any Will, is to believe he acts with even less intelligence and circumspection than his creatures. Man, in the most uncultivated condition in which he can be found, does not engage in an undertaking of an important character, without acting under the sanction of a Will definitely formed. The brute, led as he is by blind instinct, may act without a Will. But where action is governed by intelligence, that intelligence must take the form of Will, especially in all deliberate undertakings. As intelligence belongs to Jehovah in an infinite degree, and inasmuch as it cannot be

supposed he rushed to the creation of man, without reflection or foresight, the least that can be admitted in regard to the transaction is, that God must have had *some* distinct Will to accomplish in this work. Not only a Will to *create* a race of intelligencies, but a Will to create them for some *definite purpose*, some clearly defined, absolutely certain, and unalterably fixed *destiny, or end!* An intelligent Will is formed with an express reference to the *end* or *result* of the undertaking, as well as to its commencement and progress.

THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD'S WILL.

The moral character of a Will or Determination depends entirely upon the nature of the being who forms it. Could the existence of an infinitely Evil Spirit be imagined, whose attributes were Partiality, Hatred, Cruelty, and Revenge, it would rationally be concluded any Will he might form would partake of the nature of these attributes. Were such a being to Will to form a race of creatures, it could logically be urged that his object was to furnish himself with beings towards whom he could exercise those feelings of hatred and malice, naturally prompted by his attributes. It could then be legitimately urged that such a being, in ushering creatures into existence, willed and determined that they, or at least a large portion of them, (especial favorites perhaps excepted,) should in some way, become endlessly wretched, and that he formed them deliberately determining, or clearly foreseeing, such

to be the final result of their being. An argument of this description would be well-founded in reason, would be logical, conclusive and irrefutable. It would establish, beyond all cavil and all reasonable doubt, the doctrine of endless woe. An attempt to prove the theory of a final reign of universal holiness and happiness, in a universe created and presided over by this malignant being—or an endeavor to show that in forming his creatures, he would or could Will their final and everlasting purity and bliss—would be an effort as lacking in consistency and reason, as it would be utterly futile and fruitless! Let the premises once be clearly established—let the existence of a God of this evil nature, with these accursed attributes, be distinctly proved—and the sentiment of eternal wretchedness, to be inflicted on the beings he has formed, would be a doctrine indisputably established. No skill, or art, or sophistry, could invalidate or weaken the argument on which that doctrine would rest!

THE CREATOR NOT A BEING OF EVIL.

But thanks be to heaven!—glorious, soul-sustaining truth!—such is not the God who created the heavens, and earth, and all things therein—such is not the character of Him who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and in whose keeping alone is the everlasting destiny of every being! No; he who is our Creator and our God—he whose right and duty it is to determine what shall be the future and eternal condition of his own offspring—is a be-

ing whose nature is infinite Love—"God is Love."¹ He is truly and emphatically "the God of Love and Peace."² His attributes are Goodness, Wisdom, Justice, Mercy. Hence the "one only living and true God," is in reality—(O, glorious reality!)—a being directly the opposite, in every characteristic, and in every possible respect, of the Evil One whose existence was above supposed. Now let the inquiry be seriously and deliberately made—Can it be reasonably believed that the true God would deliberately create the beings he ushers into existence, under the influence of the same description of Will, and for the same purpose and destiny, as an infinitely evil being? It has been seen to be a rational and logical conclusion, that a God whose attributes and nature were wholly evil and malignant, would create beings, expressly determining, or clearly foreseeing, their unmitigated and endless agony. Is it a rational and logical conclusion, that a God of an opposite character, a "God of Love," would form beings, equally determining, or equally foreseeing, the same awfully horrible doom? Are the principles of Love and Evil to be confounded together? Are their influences and fruits the same? Can it be supposed a God of Infinite Love, and a God of Infinite Evil, would act precisely alike in a given case? To respond in the affirmative, is to destroy all distinction in moral principle, and to reduce ourselves to the level of the brutes. If it is consistent to believe that a God of Evil would form the most of his creatures (favorites excepted) determining, or

¹ 1 John iv. 8.² 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

knowing, that through certain means, they would become plunged into interminable torments, is it equally consistent to believe, a God of Goodness, Mercy, and compassion, would create beings determining or foreseeing the same destiny? If not—if the two beings would act on totally different principles in creating, and pursue courses in entirely opposite directions, and form beings for purposes and destinies infinitely diverse—in what manner would this immense disparity be manifested? Could it be manifested in any other way, than that while the God of Evil would form the most of his creatures for infinite sin, darkness and woe, the “God of Love” would usher his creatures into existence, deliberately determining, and distinctly foreseeing, that every soul would finally enter upon the enjoyment of immortal and eternal purity and happiness? What other possible moral distinction could there be between the purposes, or the final results, of the works of these two beings? The reader is most respectfully urged to give these inquiries a calm and deliberate consideration.

PETITION OF AN ANGEL OF DARKNESS.

It being an universally admitted truth that “God is Love,” and that his attributes are goodness, wisdom, justice, mercy and power, a supposition may be introduced in illustration of our subject. Let it be imagined that while the purpose and plan of man’s creation were in contemplation and undecided upon, in the councils of heaven, two angels

approached and addressed the Most High. The first is an angel of Darkness. He speaks:—"Omnipotent God, who hast at thy disposal the everlasting destiny of the race of beings now about to be formed, and who alone canst determine whether the existence to be conferred shall prove an endless evil or an endless blessing! I beseech you, create mankind with a settled Determination, Will and Decree, that unnumbered millions of them shall be plunged into agonies indescribable, there to wail and suffer as long as eternity endures! Or, if it would not be consistent for thee thus to determinately *Decree* and *Will*, I pray thee, create them weak and ignorant—give them bodies full of passions that can easily be excited to excess—place them in a world where they will be continually surrounded with temptations, which thou knowest they will give way to—give them freedom of will to sin or not, as they please, whilst thou distinctly perceivest they will abuse this freedom and fall into wickedness—place their everlasting destiny in their own keeping, dependent upon the operations of their own erring minds and wayward feelings, and call upon them to choose life or death—yet be careful to do all this, I beseech thee, with a clear foresight and knowledge that this plan will certainly result in the endless wretchedness of much the greater portion of the race! It mattereth little to me, O Sovereign Creator, whether man is lost forever, as the effect of thy deliberate decree, or as the effect of his own sins—only be sure to form the race with a positive knowledge that, in *some* way, large portions shall experi-

once unmitigated and unending pains, and *I am satisfied!*" Such is the petition of the angel of Darkness.

PETITION OF AN ANGEL OF LIGHT.

But an angel of Light draws near the Throne of heaven, and in a voice of thrilling melody, utters this prayer:—"Listen not, I beseech thee, O God of Love, to the petition of the angel of Darkness; but listen rather to the promptings of thine own infinite Goodness. If it be according to the dictates of thy unerring Wisdom so to create the human race that their existence must commence in imperfection, ignorance, and an exposure to evil and sin, yet let their subjection to the same be made in express view of a deliverance therefrom. Endow them, Gracious Spirit, with souls upon which thine own divine image shall be enstamped—souls which, although liable to give way to temptation, and fall into sin, shall still contain faculties that can be appealed to, and brought into an activity that shall result in their emancipation from sin and ignorance, and their elevation to high degrees of purity and love. And thus, Holy Creator, allow their subjection to sin, and the discipline through which they may be called to pass in consequence of the same, under thy wise government, to strengthen their souls more and more in moral principles, and impart a constantly increasing ability to exercise higher degrees of moral freedom, until, through such means of instruction, purification and sanctification, as thou shalt be pleased to grant both in their earthly

and their subsequent stages of existence, they shall universally be made fit for thy blessed presence, and crowned with immortal holiness and felicity! Let not evil, I implore thee, triumph forever over thy offspring; but through the mediation and reign of thy dear Son, cause sin and death to be annihilated, and salvation and peace to reign triumphant throughout the universe!"

ANSWER TO THESE PETITIONS.

Here are two petitions supposed to be addressed to the Most High. The former is *opposed* to every characteristic and every attribute in the Divine Nature—and the latter *accords* most perfectly, in all possible respects, with the whole circle of God's attributes—beseeches him to do what every principle and emotion in his character prompts to have done! Which of these petitions is it reasonable to suppose he would grant? Upon which would he proceed to form the Will or Determination to create the human race? If he would grant that petition which is *opposed* to his attributes, then, and not until then, the doctrine of infinite evil and endless ruin and woe, will prove true. But if he would grant that which *agrees* and *harmonizes* with all his attributes, and which alone can bring them into perfect coöperation with each other, then the doctrine of the ultimate salvation of the entire family of man, rests upon the same foundation with the existence and attributes of Jehovah! But these questions are unnecessary. There can be no doubt in a reasoning mind, that God would grant that petition only

which accorded with his own nature and perfections. And upon the petition of the angel of Light and Love, or rather upon the principles embodied in that petition, it may be consistently believed that Will of God was formed which resulted in the creation of mankind.

SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY IN REGARD TO GOD'S WILL.

These deductions of reason as to the Will of God, respecting man's creation, are fully sustained and corroborated by the most emphatic declarations of the Scriptures. While it is nowhere declared or intimated in the Bible, that God ever Willed that his creatures should fall into endless sin and misery, it is distinctly and repeatedly asserted that he Wills the final repentance and salvation of all men. The language of the Saviour in respect to the Will of God, throws instructive and convincing light on this point. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own *will*, but the *will* of him that sent me. And this is the Father's *will* which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day."¹ How many has the Father given to his Son?—"All things are delivered unto me of my Father."² "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given *all things* into his hand."³ "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance,

¹ John vi. 37—39.

² Matt. xi. 27.

³ John iii. 35.

and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."¹ When this brief but comprehensive and emphatic testimony is summed up, its evidence cannot be misunderstood. It declares that *all things* have been given to Christ—that it is God's Will that of *all* he had given to his Son, he should *lose nothing*—that Christ came down from heaven to do this Will of God—and that consequently *all* that the Father gave the Son [all things—the heathen—the uttermost parts of the earth] shall come unto him, and shall not be cast out!

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE WILL OF GOD BY THE APOSTLES.

The apostles, in speaking of the Will of God, describe it in perfect accordance with the above testimony of the Saviour.—“Having made known unto us the mystery of his Will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth,² even in him.”³ This language of St. Paul declares

¹ Ps. ii. 8.

² It is the testimony of Archbishop Newcome, Professor Stuart, and other eminent linguists, that the Scripture phrases—“all things in heaven, and on earth,” and “things in heaven, earth, and under the earth,” are Hebrew forms of speech, signifying “all persons, all intelligent beings.” Dr. Adam Clarke makes the following declaration in relation to this phraseology:—“It is usual with the Hebrews, and indeed with all ancient nations, to express by things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth, all beings of all kinds; universal nature.”—*Com. on Phil. ii. 11.*

³ Eph. i. 9, 10.

that it is the Will of God to gather all things together into One. And that there might be no misunderstanding who this One is, into whom all humanity are to be finally gathered, he designates him, viz., "Christ." The meaning being the same as though the Apostle had written—(what indeed, may be considered the true translation)—"that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather all things together into one—i. e., into Christ." And to make his meaning doubly evident, he reiterates the universality of this gathering, and repeats also that it is to be in Christ—that "he might gather all things together into One—i. e., into Christ—all things both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even to gather them into him—Christ." What effect is wrought upon all who are brought into Christ? Let the Apostle describe it—"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."¹

St. Peter describes the Will of God in peculiar language, as perfectly according with the principles above laid down—"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, *not willing* that any should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance."² The Apostle first declares what *is not* the Will of God—it is *not* his Will that *any* should perish. He then asserts what the actual Will of God is, viz., it *is* his Will that *all men* should come to repentance.

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17.² 2 Pet. iii. 9.

In language still more plain, if possible—yea, in language the force of which cannot be evaded—St. Paul lays before us the Will of God. He declares emphatically that God “WILL have *all men* to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth!”¹ The metaphysical distinctions in the Will of God, which are sometimes attempted to be made, do not weaken in the slightest degree the force of the evidence afforded by this passage. Whether this Will is a will of *desire*, or a will of *determination*, the weight of the testimony is the same. For in an infinitely perfect God, how can *desire* or *will-iness* exist, without a *determination* to accomplish that which is desired? To contend that Jehovah *desires* that to take place which he does not, or cannot determine shall take place, is to contend that he is unsatisfied and unhappy. His *desire* would be greater than his *resources*; hence he would be imperfect—and desire unsatisfied, necessarily produces unhappiness! But this state of things cannot pertain to the Deity. In a perfect God, to *desire* is to *will*—and to *will* is to *accomplish*.

ACKNOWLEDGED THAT GOD'S WILL IS TO SAVE ALL—
OBJECTIONS.

It is thus established by the Divine Word that God has deliberately Willed or Determined that all men shall be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. This fact is so emphatically declared in the Scriptures, that few are now disposed to

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 4.

question it. But to avoid the conclusion to which this truth plainly and directly leads, attempts are sometimes made to show that God's Will is *not always accomplished*. The argument is framed something in the following manner: "God not only wills that all men shall be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth, but he also wills that all men shall repent *now*—shall turn from sin *this hour*. But all men do not *now* repent, and hence the Will of God in this respect is constantly being *frustrated*—and if frustrated in this *present* purpose, it may also be frustrated in any future purpose for the salvation of all mankind!" The whole *gist* of this argument is, that although God may Will to do any particular work, yet it is not certain he will be able to accomplish that Will, and man can therefore put *no great dependence* upon it!

THE OBJECTION SUICIDAL.

It is almost needless to remark, that this position is perfectly *suicidal*. It is destructive to all well-founded hope in God—quite as much so to the hopes of those who urge it, as of those against whom it is brought. If the Will of God is weak, defective and uncertain, upon what can human beings place their hopes of future immortality and endless felicity? Man feels his own weakness and want of power—he realizes that he possesses within himself little ability to secure his present, and none to secure his future well-being and happiness. His only dependence for the blessings of the present life,

and more especially for the life to come, is upon God. Not only upon the goodness and mercy of the Creator—not only upon his *willingness* to bless his dependent creatures—but upon his *ability* to do so—upon his *power* to put into execution the holy and blessed designs he may form towards the children of earth. Whatever, therefore, detracts from the ability of Jehovah—whatever weakens the confidence of mankind in his resources, and his Power to accomplish whatsoever he Wills to do—undermines the whole superstructure of Christian faith and hope, and leaves the world afloat upon the tempestuous sea of uncertainty.

If there is any doubt as to the ability of God to accomplish his declared Will, to save the world, then the same doubt must rest upon his ability to save a part of the world, or even a soul of humanity. For this is a matter over which Deity himself has no control. It cannot be supposed he *voluntarily* makes himself unable to accomplish the purposes of his Will. If this inability pertains to him, it is *involuntary* on his part—it is a *deficiency* which he would undoubtedly remove, if in his power—but is one which it is impossible for him to remedy. Hence this weakness is an *imperfection* which, despite his desire or his Will, is liable to affect all his purposes, to invalidate all his promises, and interrupt, yea, frustrate and ruin, every design he may cherish, whether great or small—whether towards all the race, or any portion of it—both in regard to the blessings of this life, and the happiness of eternity!

GOD'S VERACITY PLEDGED AS STRONGLY TO SAVE ALL,
AS A PART.

It may well be inquired of those who take the ground that God's Will is not *always* accomplished, and that therefore his Will to save all men, is no evidence that all will experience salvation, upon what ground they base their hope of their own salvation, or the salvation of any part of mankind? If it is said their hope rests on the promise of God to save the righteous, and to reward them for their piety and devotion, then it can be replied that he has no more plainly nor positively promised to save the righteous, than he has promised to bring all men to obedience, to reconciliation, to the knowledge of the truth, and to eventual salvation. The *integrity* of Jehovah is pledged as solemnly to fulfil the latter promises as the former. Upon what ground can a rational expectation rest of the fulfilment of one class of promises, that does not include the other class? What though God *is* desirous to fulfil his promise to save the righteous, and wills and determines to do so, on the ground we are noticing, there is no *certainty* that he can accomplish that Will. It is in vain to assert that our heavenly Father will see to it, and be positively certain to accomplish his promises to the righteous; because the uncertainty of the fulfilment of his promises arises not from any want of willingness on his part, but from an inherent, unavoidable *inability*—which inability is as liable to frustrate one class of promises, or one kind of Will, as another. And what

reason is there to believe the Creator is any more *desirous* to accomplish his promise to reward those who become righteous in this life, than his promise to save all men finally? When the former promise was made, those who rest their hopes upon it had done nothing whereby to *claim* that it should be fulfilled, any more than the mass of the world, whose welfare is involved in the latter promise. If it is possible that God could be more desirous to fulfil one promise more than another, it is reasonable to believe he would be more disposed to accomplish that which proposes a greater good, than that which aims at a lesser. And that the promise to bring all the numberless generations of the human race to repentance of sin, to reconciliation with God, to immortal purity and happiness, is infinitely more important than any promise which aims to accomplish this desirable work upon a part only, is self-evident. Both promises have been made by the same God—both depend upon the same *veracity*, and the same *ability* in the Deity, for their accomplishment. If there is any doubt that one may not be fulfilled, the same doubt must necessarily rest upon the other. If there is any certainty, any assurance, any hope that God will redeem the one, the same certainty, assurance and hope can be entertained of the fulfilment of the other. Originating in the same Deity, and dependent upon the same Will, and the same resources, both descriptions of promise will be completed, or will perish together!

THE WILL OF GOD NEVER FRUSTRATED.

The great deficiency in the objection under consideration is in the supposition that God's Will is ever frustrated in any respect. This is a violation of all consistent views of a perfect Deity. It is undoubtedly the Will of the Creator, that sinners should repent; but that it is his Will that they should repent at any given hour or moment, is assuming a point which should be proved. There is no evidence in support of this position. The Scriptures ascribe no general rule of this description to God. If it were indeed so, then the Will of the Omnipotent Jehovah, it may be believed, has been frustrated in numberless instances, every hour since the fall of Adam. Who can believe this in regard to that God, of whom it is said in the book of inspiration—"He doeth according to his Will in the armies of heaven, and *among the inhabitants of the earth?*"

Neither is it necessary to run to the other extreme, and contend that it is God's Will that man *shall* sin, or that he shall *remain* a sinner any definite period of time. This position would be quite as untenable as the opposite. The Creator does not *will* any man into sinful acts. "Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is

finished, bringeth forth death."¹ The man who gives himself up to the supposition that God *wills* his sinful acts, and *wills* that he shall remain in sin for any given period of time, and that he cannot and need not reform, until some particular moment arrives, when God has *willed* he shall repent, is laboring under a dangerous delusion, which can be fruitful of nothing but evil and wretchedness!

A PLACE MUST BE ALLOWED FOR EXERCISE OF MAN'S
FREEDOM.

Between these two extremes in regard to the Will of the Most High, a place must be found for the exercise of man's freedom. However theorists may speculate, every man feels a consciousness that he possesses a certain amount of moral freedom, and constantly *acts* on this supposition through life. To lose sight of this limited human freedom, (be it more or less,) is to drop a link in the mysterious chain of God's wonder-working Providence, which nothing can supply, and which results in an extreme that experience, consciousness, and man's accountability equally reject. It is true, the precise point where the sovereignty of God's Will unites with the freedom of man's will, is concealed or removed beyond human perception in this world. But that there is somewhere such an union, so that, like a wheel within a wheel, the Will of the creature and of the Creator act somewhat separately in human proceedings, and yet also in conjunction, in more remote causes and results, is a position which it would

¹ James i. 13—15.

seem must be admitted into the mind, although at present inexplicable in its nature.

"But God o'errules all human follies still,
And bends the tough materials to his Will."

GOD'S WILL AND MAN'S ACTIONS.

It is in vain to attempt to reconcile or harmonize every act of every man through life, with the Will of God. This is a work many portions of which reach beyond the present limit of human capacity. It has been in vain efforts to discover the links which in all cases unite the actions of the creature with the Will of God, or the points where these links are supposed to be broken—in attempts to decide that this action accords with his Will, and that action is in *opposition* to it—that multitudes have been led into those crude and contradictory views of Sovereign Will, which reduce it to a principle weaker, if possible, and less to be depended upon, than even the will of man.

"One part, one little part, we dimly scan,
Through the dark medium of life's feverish dream,
Yet dare arraign the whole stupendous plan,
If but that little part incongruous seem:
Nor is that part, perhaps, what mortals deem."

To fathom these mysteries, and bring them out to a satisfactory solution, requires a depth of knowledge and an extent of perception, which has not been vouchsafed to man, in the present stage of existence. All that the Scriptures reveal to us on this subject—all that reason will enable us to compre-

hend—and all that it is essential for our welfare and peace to know, is this—That it is the Will of God that man should commence his existence in imperfection and ignorance, but at the same time in the endowment of faculties of the most noble and valuable description—faculties capable of being enlightened and enlarged to an indefinite, if not an infinite extent, and in the exercise of which the soul can ascend to high degrees of perfection;—that it is the Will of God that man shall exercise these faculties in a certain degree of freedom or self-control, by which he may adopt or refuse, do right or wrong, according to the decisions of his mind, or the dictates of his conscience;—that it is the Will of God at the same time, to exercise over man, through Jesus Christ his Son, an equitable, righteous and wise moral government, which holds him accountable for the manner in which he uses the freedom intrusted to him, and administers just and wholesome chastisements for all known and wilful violations of moral rectitude, and bestows rich rewards whenever he repents and performs actions that accord with truth and righteousness;—that it is the Will of God so to constitute his government, and so to administer it by the Saviour, as that, under its influences, all men shall finally become instructed, enlightened, and purified, and shall progress, step by step, from ignorance and imperfection, up to an equality, in knowledge, holiness and bliss, with the angels which are in heaven! All this we may, and do know of the Will of God—for all this has been revealed in the Scriptures of divine inspiration.

But more than this, what can we know in this life? And more than this, what need we know! Here is amply enough to warn man of the danger of sin—to lead and encourage him into the practice of righteousness—and here, too, is amply enough to afford a broad and deep foundation for the cherishing of every hope and desire that the Christian and philanthropist can wish to entertain for himself and for his race!

SCRIPTURE PROOF OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S
WILL.

Whatever diversity of opinion may exist in regard to points above discussed, of one thing there can be no question, viz., that God has distinctly revealed it in the Scriptures as his Will, that "all men shall be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth." How unreasonable, and how fatal to *all* faith and all hope, it is to doubt the *ability* of the Most High to accomplish his Will, has already been demonstrated. The Scriptures place this subject entirely at rest, in the mind of every individual who acknowledges their authority. Their evidence that God is abundantly, infinitely, able to complete the purposes of his Will, is uncommonly clear and explicit. No truth of the Bible is revealed more distinctly. St. Paul ascribes these words to the Redeemer—"Lo I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy Will, O God."¹ Jesus himself exclaims—"I came down from heaven, not

¹ Heb. x. 7.

to do mine own will, but the Will of him that sent me."¹ And again—"My meat is to do the Will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."² As Christ came to *do the Will of God*, it is evident that God's Will can and will be done. It is not to be supposed that the Father would send his Son, or that Jesus Christ would consent to come into the world, to do that which could not, or would not be done! And moreover, if Christ came to do the Will of God and to *finish* his work, then he assuredly came to save all men, and bring them unto the knowledge of the truth:—for this, and nothing less than this, as we have seen, is the Will of God. That the Saviour came to accomplish *this* Will of the Creator, agrees with other declarations made by Christ. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."³ "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."⁴ "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."⁵ It is seen by these quotations, how perfectly the Will of God and the mission of Christ agree. God *willed* to save all men—Christ came to do that Will—to save the world!

STILL MORE EXPLICIT DECLARATIONS.

The testimony of the Scriptures in regard to the fulfilment of God's Will, can be found in still more explicit and emphatic language. St. Paul declares that God "*worketh all things* after the counsel of

¹ John vi. 38.

² John iv. 34.

³ John iii. 17.

⁴ John xii. 47.

⁵ John xii. 32.

his own Will."¹ If it is true that God worketh *all things* according to his Will, then it is evidently untrue that his Will is ever frustrated. In support of the same truth is the language recorded by the prophet Daniel—"He doeth according to his Will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?"² This testimony is even more convincing, if possible, because it enters more into detail. It asserts that God does his Will in heaven. This, all acknowledge; but, while making this acknowledgment, it is at the same time contended by many, that he *does not* accomplish his Will among men on the earth. It will be perceived, however, that the words of inspiration assert as positively that the Will of God is accomplished among the inhabitants of earth, as in the army of heaven. If the one declaration is literally true, so must the other be. And to confirm the truth that Jehovah has abundant ability to accomplish the purposes of his Will, at all times, and in all worlds, it is declared that no subordinate being can interpose a will or exert a power, that can thwart the designs of the Most High, or that can even question with any effect the movements of his infinitely perfect Providence—"None can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?" But to put at rest in the mind of every believer in the Divine Existence, all doubt as to his abundant ability to complete his Will to the uttermost, Jehovah him-

¹ Eph. i. 11.² Dan. iv. 35.

self speaks directly and conclusively to this point: "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, *My counsel SHALL stand, and I WILL do all my pleasure.*"¹ The reader will mark the emphatic language of God. He does not declare that he simply *desires* to accomplish the purpose of his Will, or that he *endeavors* to do it; but his words are in the imperative or positive mode—"My counsel *shall* stand—I *will* do all my pleasure."

SUMMING UP OF SCRIPTURE TESTIMONY.

The summing up of the Scripture testimony in regard both to the nature and the accomplishment of the Will of God, is brief and conclusive. The divine Word asserts that God hath willed to gather *all things* into Christ—hath willed that *all men* shall be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth! Christ proclaims to us that he came *to do* the Will of God! The prophet insists that the great I Am doeth his Will in heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and that there is no power able to resist him! And God himself declares that his counsel *shall* stand, and he *will* do all his pleasure! Where, then, is there room for unbelief? Who can yet be faithless? What point is there remaining in regard to this subject, upon which a doubt can rest? What rational mind, willing to give the slightest heed to the deductions of

¹ Isa. xlv. 9, 10.

his own reason, or disposed to submit to the decisions of the Scriptures, as the legitimate tribunal for the solving of all questions relating to man's duty and destiny, can, in view of this array of testimony, hesitate longer to rejoice in the belief that the entire race of man shall at last be brought into the kingdom of Christ—that all men shall be led to yield obedience to the divine law, be renovated from ignorance and sin, be permitted to participate in immortal light and purity, and to delight forever in an upward flight in truth and joy? Is not a continuance in doubt, with the clear light of this truth beaming upon the mind, a disparagement of the voice of reason—a questioning of the truth of the Scriptures, and an ungenerous and ungrateful distrust of the wisdom, goodness, and ability of the Father of spirits?

“To lift us from this abject, to sublime ;
 This flux, to permanent ; this dark, to day ;
 This foul, to pure ; this turbid, to serene ;
 This mean, to mighty !—for this glorious end
 The Almighty, rising, his long sabbath broke !”

THE ACCOMPLISHMENT OF GOD'S WILL NOT CONFINED
 TO THIS LIFE.

The defect in most minds, which leads to doubt and unbelief in regard to a final reign of universal holiness and peace, is in being too hasty, too limited, in estimating the *time* which God has allotted himself for the accomplishment of his Will and his purposes. Jehovah has at his command the entire duration of eternity, for the completion of his de-

signs. Yet from this absolutely limitless duration, it is singularly supposed, he confines himself to threescore years and ten, (which is but a moment when compared with eternity,) to work out all those purposes towards each man, which fix his everlasting destiny. It is imagined that he selects this brief introductory period of human existence, when man is in the greatest imperfection, when he is involved in ignorance and blindness, subject to the passions and infirmities of the body, and surrounded by alluring temptations—to accomplish all he intends to do, to bring his offspring into a conformity to his Will and the requirements of his moral government. If, during these brief years, and amid all these imperfections, God succeeds in working out his Will upon the children of men—if he succeeds in renovating the souls of his creatures, and making them fit, in this life, for the abodes of blessedness above—it is well. But if his efforts are not successful—if man is not made meet for the society of angels, when this fleeting space of time has elapsed, God *abandons* the work, and ceases all exertion to reform and elevate him, and allows him to fall into utter and endless ruin. In case of this disastrous result, it may well be supposed the Deity will exclaim—"It is done—my power, my wisdom, my resources, my love, are all exhausted—sin, misery and death are triumphant—man, the offspring of God, the redeemed of Christ, is endlessly miserable; and hell resounds with shouts of victory!" Not only is it supposed, that, at the close of man's short life on the earth, the Creator desists from all

farther attempt to reform his creatures, but that he immediately changes his whole policy towards them, and places them where it is made impossible to repent—where they shall not even have the poor privilege of becoming better, however much they may desire to do so. Death is supposed to cut short all the efforts of God, and Christ, and angels, for the elevation and improvement of mankind, and the character of each human being exactly as it then is, becomes stereotyped for eternity!!!

Singular infatuation! unaccountable presumption! that would fain crowd all the works and triumphs of Infinite Wisdom and Love into the narrow circle of *seventy* years! that would dream of exhausting the infinite energies and resources of Omnipotence, in the *speck* of time allotted to man below! That the Scriptures give no countenance to these limitations of time and resources in the accomplishment of the Will of God, must be well known to every reader of the holy word. The Bible declares it to be his Will that *all men* shall be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth. It moreover declares that he accomplishes his Will in all respects—"Who worketh *all things* after the counsel of his own Will." That his Will to bring all men to salvation and truth, is not fully completed in the present world, is evident to the senses of every man. But should this be considered as invalidating the plain declaration of the Scriptures—or as bringing into discredit the integrity of God, involved as it is in his pledged word—or as an evidence that his Will is frustrated in this important

matter? It should not, and it will not, in the mind of the enlightened believer in God. It only enlarges his comprehension of the sphere of the Deity's operations, and brings him unavoidably into the belief that whatever portion of God's Will is not accomplished in this life, will be completed in the world to come. Not that his Will has been *frustrated* here, and must be *remedied* hereafter—for the Scriptures do not declare that God ever willed to save all men and bring them to the knowledge of the truth *in this life*—but that, in the great cycle of the Creator's providence, the time for the perfect accomplishment of this Will, is not to be expected in the brief period of human life below, but should be looked for “in the dispensation of the fulness of times” to come.

“Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
So God has greatly purposed; who would else
In his dishonored works himself endure
Dishonor, and be wronged without redress.

THE OPERATIONS OF GOD'S PROVIDENCE NOT RESTRICTED
TO TIME OR PLACE.

The Scriptures, so far from contradicting these views, support them. In no instance do they intimate that all God can do, or designs to do, for the improvement and salvation of the sinner, is accomplished in this world. On the contrary they represent the Creator as acting according to his own “good pleasure” in these matters, as to time, occasion and place. They declare all “seasons and times” to be at

his disposal, and assert that time with him is not to be reckoned as with man—"Beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years, as one day."¹ What consistent reason can be assigned why a Will so holy and lovely as that which designs the extinction of all sin and evil, and the sanctification and happiness of the entire family of man, should not be carried on to an entire fulfilment in the life to come? Are the souls of sinners more precious here than they will be hereafter? Is it any more desirable that the wicked should repent and turn to God here, than it will be hereafter? If it is right that sinners should repent here, will it not be right for them to repent hereafter?—and would it not be a great *wrong* to deprive them the privilege or opportunity so to do? If it manifests great goodness and mercy in God and in Christ to be interested in the sinner's welfare here, will not the same goodness and mercy inspire a similar interest in the life to come? Can time or place change principles, or alter the purposes of infinite love and compassion? Is not Jehovah immutable and unchangeable in his nature? If "God is Love" to-day, will he not be Love forever? If his love leads him to shower blessings on all mankind in this life, will it not exert the same influence upon him through eternity?

The plain dictates of reason afford the assurance that the Almighty would not prescribe to himself bounds, nor voluntarily rear obstacles which he foresaw would frustrate his own purposes. Time

¹ 2 Pet. iii. 8.

and place can possess no power, and work no influence to prevent the accomplishment of the plans of Him who fills all space, and who comprehends eternity as though it was *now*.

"Eternity, with all its years,
Stands *present* in thy view ;
To thee there's nothing old appears—
Great God! *there's nothing new.*"

In working the counsels of his Will, he chooses his own time and his own place. And although it may sometimes appear to the comprehension of mortals, that his Providence moves tardily, and even in a direction opposite to his declared Will and Purpose, yet let it be remembered that Infinite Wisdom guides the whole, and that the motions of all the counter-revolving wheels of this master-piece of heavenly mechanism, are governed by unerring laws, and are working together to produce at last one grand and glorious result—even the perfect accomplishment of the Will of Him who is yet to be "all in all!" The humble Christian, who truly trusts in God, and exercises a lively and genuine faith in Jesus Christ, will upon this, as upon all other subjects, be only anxious to know distinctly *what is God's Will*. And when he reads, in language clear and unequivocal, in the volume of inspiration, that the Most High Wills that "*all men shall be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth,*" it is *enough*—*amply enough!* He permits not himself to doubt for a moment the ability of Jehovah to complete his determinate purposes. But leaving to God to select his own times and sea-

sons, and to adopt his own ways and means, he exclaims, with a heart full of rejoicing at the transcendently glorious truth presented for his reception, "Lord, let thy Will be done!"

"In heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes his firm decrees ;
And by his saints, it stands confessed,
That what he does is ever blessed."

CONCLUSION.

Our task is now completed. Each of the fundamental Attributes of God has been examined candidly and faithfully, as we trust, in especial reference to the most important of all subjects, the ultimate destiny of the human race. It has been shown logically and clearly, it is believed, that each distinct Attribute, when considered in regard to its nature, its legitimate influence in the councils of the Most High, and its appropriate work in the movements of Divine Providence, establishes beyond reasonable question, the truth of the doctrine of the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. This doctrine, it has been manifested also, is alone capable of reconciling the promptings and offices of the several Attributes together, and uniting them in a harmonious coöperation, for the successful execution of the designs of Deity. And moreover, when these Attributes have been examined *collectively*, as united together and forming the determinate Will of God, it has been shown, not only that each in this state of combination, retains all its former strength and weight in favor of this doctrine, but that their united testimony, presented in *Jehovah's Will*, sustains and confirms it, in a manner perfectly conclusive and unquestionable! And what has the Christian, who follows Revelation and Reason, the only lights which can lead to religious Truth, now to do, but to enter into the belief and enjoyment of this holy faith? It not only meets the demands and conforms to the decisions of unclouded Reason, and

receives the unequivocal sanction of God's revealed Word, but (sweet and refreshing test of its heavenly origin,) it comes fully up to the purest desires and the highest aspirations, that can possibly enter the soul of man on earth, or of angel in heaven. What wish more elevated, more holy, more angelic, than for the renovation of universal humanity—the repentance, sanctification, and happiness of the entire family of man! And the assurance of the gratification of this yearning for boundless good and blessedness, is found in the faith thus clearly established. It elevates the soul of the believer to Zion's luminous pinnacle, inaccessible to the approach of all who are without its guidance, where God's holy *word*, and godlike *reason*, and godlike *wishes*, alone can meet and mingle in one harmonious and heavenly Truth! Glorious Mount! irradiated by celestial light! where dwells the tabernacle of God! Be thou a resting-place for my soul through this world's weary pilgrimage! And ever and anon, as the misfortunes and sorrows of life encompass me, and the waves of trouble roar around to overwhelm, then let my spirit ascend to its celestial summit, and imbibe new strength to meet the afflictions of earth, by gazing from its lofty height far up to scenes of immortal joy and peace, prepared for me and for my race! Blissful scenes! where all the jarring discords of life shall be lost amid celestial and eternal harmony—where sin shall cease, and sorrow and evil shall die to live no more forever!

Yes, dear reader; if God is to be believed—if

reason is to be followed—if the holiest desires of the heart are to be trusted—this great blessing, unpurchased and unpurchasable, flowing only from the rich fountain of Infinite Grace, will yet descend upon humanity! It must be so! “Sin, sorrow, misery, pain, and every kind of death, must finally have an end, and all rational intelligences be reclaimed and restored to the favor and enjoyment of God, and permitted to praise him through all ages, in the noblest strains of gratitude and love. Oh, glorious and happy consummation, long ago foretold by the faithful prophets of old.” * * * * *

“Then shall arrive the grand and final consummation, when every will shall be subdued to the Will of God. Then shall the wisdom, the might, and the goodness of our God become the wisdom, might and goodness of all his intelligent creatures. The happiness of each shall multiply and overflow in the wishes and participation of the happiness of all. The universe shall begin to sound with the songs of congratulation, and all voices shall break forth in an eternal hallelujah of praise transcending praise, and glory transcending glory, to God and the Lamb! There shall be no lapse thenceforward, no falling away forever! But God in Christ, and Christ in a redeemed world, shall be a will, and a wisdom, and an action, and a mightiness, and a goodness, and a graciousness, and a glory rising on glory, and a blessing rising on blessedness, through an ever-beginning to a never-ending eternity!” Amen! Amen!!

FINIS.