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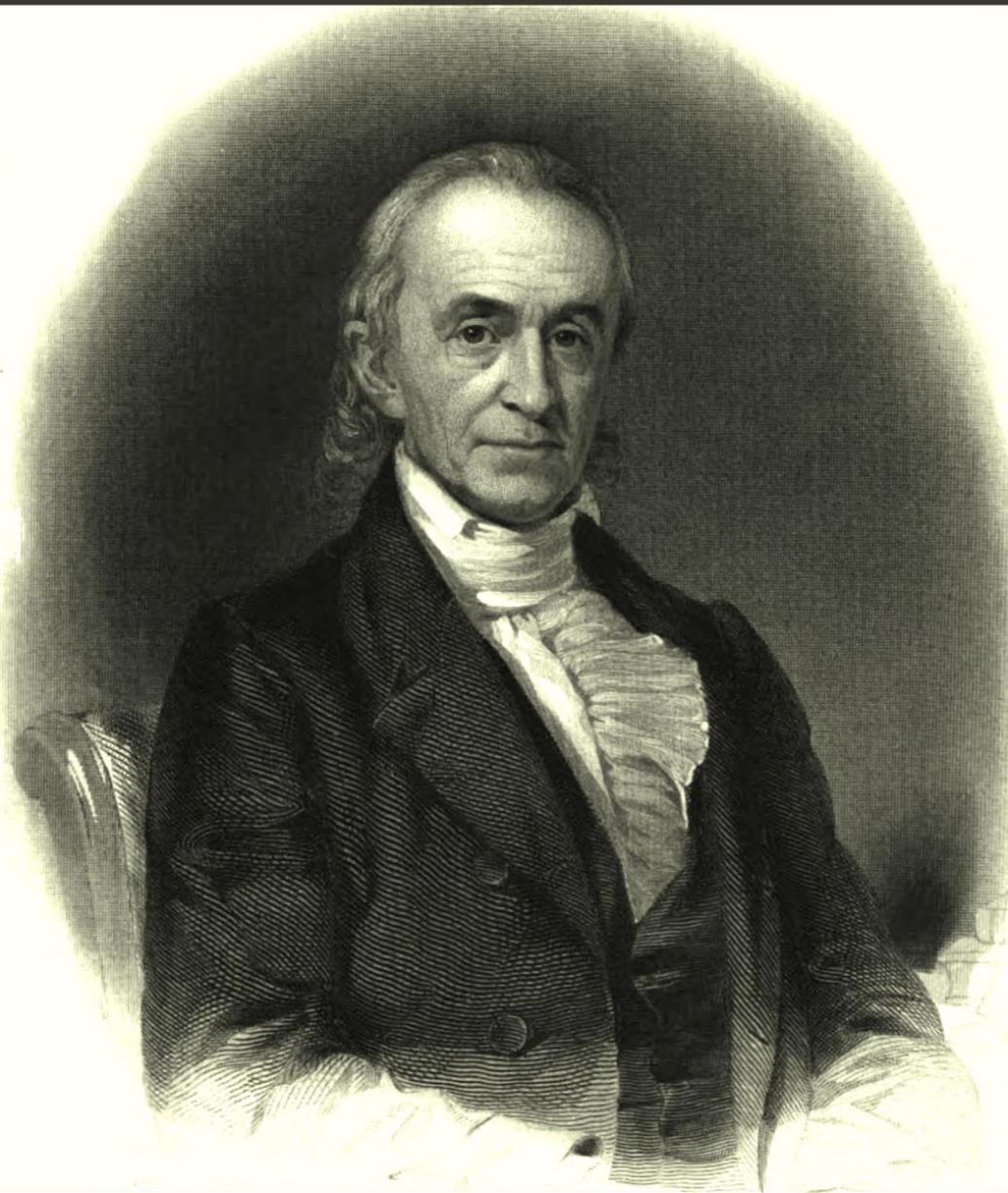
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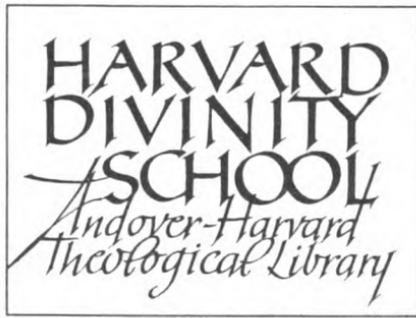
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*Lectures on the  
Moral Government of God*

Nathaniel William Taylor



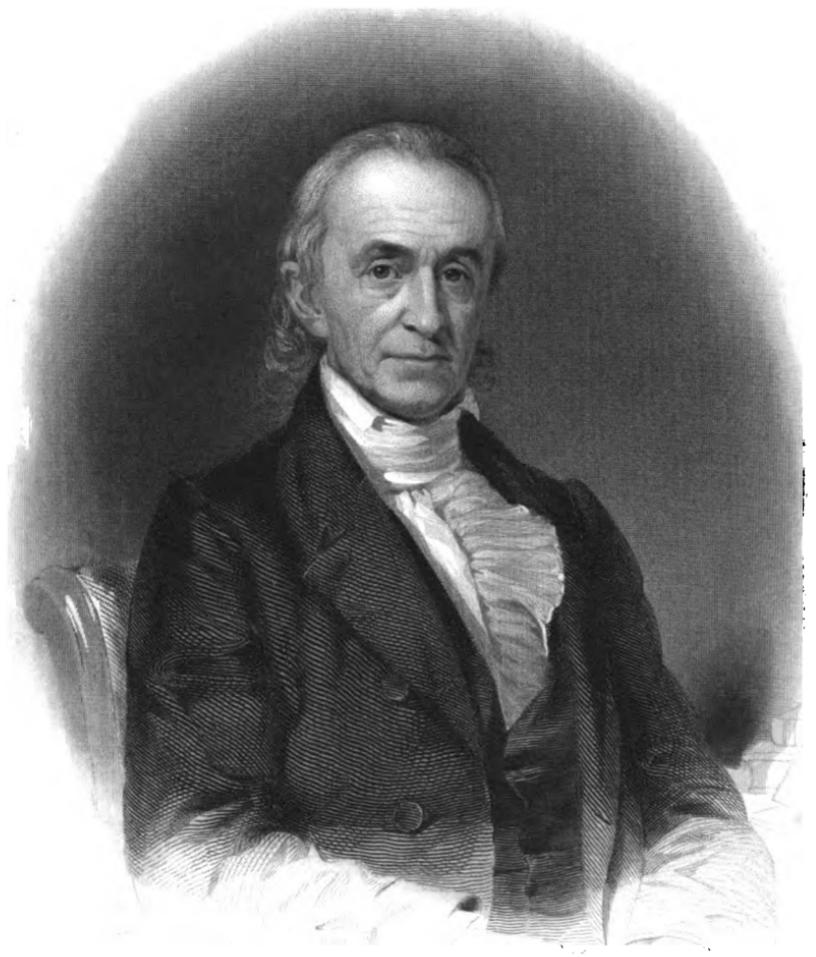








The next volume will consist of *Essays*,  
Discourses, &c., on various topics in Re-  
vealed Theology.



Rev. Nathaniel W. Taylor, D.D.

*Nath<sup>l</sup> W. Taylor.*

# LECTURES

ON THE

## MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

BY

NATHANIEL W. TAYLOR, D. D.,

LATE DWIGHT PROFESSOR OF DIDACTIC THEOLOGY  
IN YALE COLLEGE.

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"OF LAW THERE CAN BE NO LESS ACKNOWLEDGED THAN THAT HER SEAT IS THE BOSOM OF  
GOD—HER VOICE THE HARMONY OF THE WORLD."

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE Moral Government of God was the great thought of Dr. Taylor's intellect, and the favorite theme of his instructions in theology. It occupied his mind more than any and every other subject. He was ever ready to enter upon the investigation of any truth that was nearly or remotely connected with this. He was never weary of grappling with such inquiries, whether they were suggested for the first time by his own ingenuity, or had been discussed with greater or less success for centuries by speculative and earnest men. To vindicate the ways of God to man, was the object to which all his energies were consecrated, and upon which were expended the ardor of his glowing soul and the force of his strong and steadfast will. Those secondary objects which the majority of men, even students and theologians, esteem important, were freely sacrificed to the accomplishment of this commanding purpose. To this the whole living man was consecrated with an activity and intensity which have not often been equaled.

This object directed all his studies. All his investigations had their starting point from this central theme, and however far he may seem to some to have wandered in the maze of scholastic distinctions or subtle refinements, he never lost the clue by which he returned to the subject of his great argument. Hence his interest in psychology. He studied man as an intellectual and moral being, that he might understand God's government over him. It was in the light of man's relations to God, that he sought to know what are his capacities, what his obligations, what his present condition, and

what his future destiny. With the same intent he investigated with a passionate interest the nature of civil government, the authority of human law in all its varieties, and the principles by which the various forms of human society are organized and held together. He reasoned, that *man* being the subject of all these societies, *duty* being the obligation common to all, and *law* the expression of the authority by which they are sustained—they must furnish analogies to that moral government of God which comprehends the universe within its dominion. That he might understand this "*civitas Dei*," this "kingdom of God," he studied law, authority, and justice in their essential nature and constituent elements. Indeed, concerning theology itself, he would have adopted with few qualifications the definition given by Leibnitz, "*Quæ est quasi jurisprudentia quædam specialis, sed eadem fundamentalis ratione ceterarum. Est enim velut doctrina quædam de jure publico quod obtinet in republica Dei in homines.*"\* Above all, he diligently and earnestly sought to find in the Scriptures a true and consistent system of principles in respect to the government of God; and to develop such a system from the Scriptures as should be also consistent with the teachings of reason and conscience, he considered the great duty of the student and the teacher of theology. His views of theology as the science which has this for its object, were elevated and even sublime. The enthusiastic language in which he was accustomed to express himself on this inspiring theme, will not soon be forgotten by those who have heard him speak.

He tried every system of theology by this test: what are the principles concerning the moral government of God on which it rests, or what are the views of God's authority over man which it inculcates? If its principles were judged to be defective, vague, obscure or false—if the system did not 'commend itself to the conscience' by asserting those truths to which the conscience responds, it was rejected wholly or

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\* DISS. DE ARTE COMBIN., pp. 20, 21, ed. Erd.

in part, whatever was the authority of the theologian or of the church whose name it bore.

It was not, however, solely nor chiefly, from the relations of this subject to scientific theology, that he regarded it as of such commanding importance. His interest in this as in all other subjects, even in theology itself, was founded in a strong conviction of its practical usefulness. While he was a pastor, he wrote two sermons on the Moral Government of God, in order to vindicate the authority of His law, the justice of His retributions, and the necessity of an atonement. His interest in this subject was increased by the illustration of the practical importance of just and well settled principles in regard to it, which was developed in the Unitarian controversy. He constantly and earnestly insisted, that by the Christian preacher no subject needed to be so well understood, to enable him successfully to defend and enforce the great truths of the gospel. In his intercourse with his fellow-men and in the conduct of his own life, he manifested a loyalty to the King of Heaven, even in connection with the most trivial events, which lent a charm to all the manifestations of his character. In times of agonizing sorrow, he would utter great truths concerning God's administration, its glory and goodness, which showed that his principles on these subjects were his daily sustenance and comfort. One of the most impressive scenes of his last days was the utterance at parting with a friend, in tones of almost seraphic ardor, of the ascription of the apostle, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever."

The writers to whom Dr. Taylor was most indebted, and whose principles he sought to apply, to complete, and in some cases to correct, were Bishop Butler and Jonathan Edwards. Bishop Butler suggested the principles and the course of argument concerning the benevolence and equity of God's government, which were matured by him into a more exact system, and carried only to their legitimate conclusions. President Edwards was often in his hands, and the careful reader of

these volumes will see the relation of many of the discussions, to the teachings of that prince of New England divines, and to the whole current of what is called New England theology. The works of all the New England divines were the familiar hand-books of his reading. He was also entirely at home with the writers on natural theology, for which the English church in other times was so distinguished. From all of these authors, and the bold and energetic workings of his own mind, he reasoned out the system of principles and conclusions which is found in these volumes.

These lectures were not delivered in precisely the same order and continuous succession in which they are now presented to the reader. They were given in different portions, as parts of a course of theological instruction, each in its assigned position, and were separated from each other by the discussion of other topics. It was thought expedient, however, to arrange them in a continuous series, so as to present a complete and connected view of all that he wrote on this fundamental topic in theology. To the lectures on moral government, have been appended other essays and lectures on subjects that are naturally connected with this.

The first section embraces the discussion of the essential nature of moral government, preliminary to any inquiries as to what is the actual government of the universe, as we discover it by the light of nature. Section second treats of that government as it is made known by the light of nature, and discusses some of those questions of fact concerning the actual administration of the universe, which are appropriate to natural theology. The last four lectures of this section present a brief view of the necessity and evidences of revelation, so far as the light of nature and the lessons of human experience furnish the materials for an argument. Section third contains an extended discussion of the government of God as exhibited in revelation. Such a discussion should, in one view of the subject, according to the opinions expressed in the first section by the author, comprehend a complete system

of revealed theology. It in fact gives us only his views of the nature of the Jewish Theocracy, as being a representation or visible manifestation of the unseen kingdom of God, and a careful examination of the law of God as it is revealed in this theocracy, and by the direct teachings of the Scriptures. The opinions of the author in respect to some of the most important doctrines of the Scriptures, are however given with great distinctness, in connection with the treatment of his principal theme. Indeed, the most superficial reader of these lectures cannot fail to see in them all, from the beginning to the end—even the most abstract and metaphysical—a distinct and direct reference to the doctrines of atonement and justification. In the Appendix, will be found an essay on "Justice," which has a double interest, as a vigorous handling of the theme in its relations to civil society and the rights of man, and also in its bearings upon certain theological theories of the atonement. The essay on "the Providential Government and Purposes of God" is intimately related to the just and exact understanding of his moral government. The discussion of the question, "In what sense God can purpose opposite events," naturally arises in every attempt to vindicate the Holy One from responsibility for moral evil. The essay on "the Penalties of the Civil Law" is explained by its relation to the lecture, out of which it arises. The discussion of Miracles seems to be required by the lectures in the first volume that treat of the philosophical possibility and truth of the Christian revelation. The Lectures and Appendix present the views of the author upon some of the most important questions involved in the nature and the evidences of natural and revealed theology. These views it seemed desirable to collect and arrange in a single work.

The opinions expressed are given to the reader as the author believed and taught, and in the language in which he uttered them. His style was formed in the school of Butler and Edwards, and owes some of its peculiarities to the constant repetition of those definitions and distinctions, which he wished to impress upon the ear and to fix in the minds of the pupils

who heard him. His style was adapted to the ear, and not to the eye; it was formed in and for the lecture-room, not for the printed page. Practiced critics and editors will easily understand how difficult it is to condense or correct such a style.

It may be interesting to some of Dr. Taylor's friends and pupils to know, that the first lecture in the second volume was written only a few months before his death. It is almost the last word concerning the importance of a correct and vigorous theology which he was permitted to write, and may be viewed as his dying testimony on this most important theme.

N. P.

YALE COLLEGE, Jan. 19, 1859.

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# THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

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## SECTION I.

### WHAT IS A PERFECT MORAL GOVERNMENT?

OR

#### MORAL GOVERNMENT IN THE ABSTRACT.

##### LECTURE I.

Can we determine the nature of a perfect Moral Government?—A perfect Moral Government defined.—The definition explained and vindicated in the following particulars:

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**MORAL GOVERNMENT** may be said in general terms to be the government of moral beings by the influence of authority. It may be distinguished into different kinds, as it is vested in different administrators, and is administered over different communities. The more prominent of these different kinds of moral government are the government of God over his moral creation, which is above every other—the government of the state or civil government, and the government of the family or parental government.

We may suppose that both parental and civil governments, as manifestly indispensable in some form to man's present well-being, are alike the ordinances of a benevolent Deity, and subservient to the end of that higher system in which men are more directly the subjects of God's moral dominion.

For the purpose however of distinguishing the different kinds of moral government, so far as to aid us in our present

inquiry, we may suppose the family and the state each to exist as a distinct and independent community, and to be under a jurisdiction peculiar and appropriate to itself. As members of these particular communities, men would be under a necessity of acting in one manner rather than in another, to secure the highest well-being of the whole. As bound by such a necessity, and capable as moral beings of so acting as to defeat this great end, and to produce the opposite result in misery, they are the fit subjects of moral government, and actually as members of the family and the state, live under such a government.

- Our first notion of moral government is obviously derived from that which is parental, and is extended and modified in that conception which we form of the government of the state. Since however, both are marred by undeniable imperfection, we can appeal to neither as a perfect example of moral government. Nor can it be pretended that we have any example of a perfect moral government, which in the present world is fully unfolded to our inspection in all the detail of its administration, and in all the completeness of its issues. The most that can be claimed is, that there is such a government entered upon—one in the actual progress of administration—one which, though not fully achieving its own perfect end, the highest conceivable well-being of all—is yet so distinctly characterized by a strict adherence to the principles of equity, though modified in their application by a gracious economy, as clearly to reveal its absolute perfection.

By a perfect moral government then, is here meant not a moral government which actually secures, but one which in its true nature and tendency is perfectly adapted to secure, and which unperverted would secure the great and true end of such a government, even the highest conceivable well-being of its subjects. We may suppose such a government to exist, and the end which it is designed and fitted to accomplish, to be partially or wholly defeated, solely through perversion by its subjects. Such perversion however, would in no degree obscure, but necessarily imply the absolute perfection of the system. Nor if we suppose, that on account of the foreseen perversion of a perfect system, it would be better in relation to actual results to adopt another system, still the adoption of the latter could be justified only on the ground of the foreseen

perversion in fact of the former, and would therefore imply its absolute perfection. We may further suppose that an absolutely perfect system of moral government would be adopted by an infinitely perfect Being, notwithstanding he should foresee some degree of actual perversion and counteraction of its tendencies; for it might still be true, that he should also foresee that the actual results of such a system would be far better than those of an imperfect system, even the best possible which he can secure.

Can we then know what are the essential elements of a perfect moral government—those elements which must constitute such a government in the hands of an infinitely perfect Being, the knowledge of which must be of the highest concern to us, as the subjects of such a government? I answer, that there is no subject which mankind generally better understand; none which they are under a more imperious necessity of understanding than moral government in some of its existing forms; none of whose reality they have a more constant and sure conviction; none of whose nature in all essential respects they have a more adequate comprehension. There cannot be an existing state of man, as related to man, there cannot be a social state (and without this man can exist to no important purpose), from which the idea of a moral government and the full conviction of its reality and necessity can be separated. This conviction begins almost with our existence, even so early as when the mother by some look or action first impresses the mind of the child with the necessity of submitting his will to her will. Thus the condition of human infancy places us from the beginning in society, and naturally and necessarily introduces subjection to superior wisdom, power and goodness. From the dawn of the intellect, our parents prescribe things to be done, and forbid things not to be done, approving and disapproving, rewarding and punishing according to our doings. Thus they early assume authority over us, aiming at one comprehensive result in all our doings—that of bringing our will into conformity with theirs.

Now why is this, and who does not know why it is? It is because no family could subsist, much less be prosperous and happy without it. No matter how powerful may be the motives in other forms of exhibition, to promote the harmony and well-being of the domestic circle—no matter how strong the

mutual affections which prevail, nor how wise and good the counsels and advice which are given, it would all be naught, were there no law, no authority, no calling to account, no retribution, that is, no moral government. Why is this? Let the appeal be made to any parent who has the heart of a parent. Why is it, that he governs his children by authority; why assume this prerogative as unquestionable? Is it, that he takes pleasure in so doing for its own sake? Is it, that he loves for its own sake, to restrain their liberty, to cross their inclinations and often to inflict suffering? Or, is it because he knows their incompetence to govern themselves as well as he can govern them—because he knows their ignorance, their passion, their waywardness, and because he knows, that he should be wanting in affection and a due parental oversight and guardianship, if he did not do, what he so surely knows to be for the best? In a word, is it not because he knows *the necessity to the well-being of the family, of maintaining, do what else he may, parental authority?* What parent, what child, what human being does not understand the nature, the design, and the necessity of moral government? Who does not know all this, as it results from the nature of the human mind, as surely as he knows the necessity of food and of common air, which arises from the nature of the human body?

If we pass from the family to the state, we find the same familiar and well-known thing, having a wider range, and a higher end; though more rigorously maintained in its administration, and more fully developed in its nature and essential characteristics. Born, as most men are under some form of civil government, they learn what it is for some ruling power to exercise authority over many, as the necessary means of a nation's welfare. Here we find for the most part a great variety of statutes and enactments, having respect to the overt doings of men, but all based on one fundamental law; all implying its existence, and its supreme obligation,—the law of subjection to the powers that be. We find a sovereign Will—a Moral Governor—and **THE GREAT FACT** assumed, conceded, and acted upon—the absolute necessity of authoritative law—of a supreme unquestionable right to govern. We find a necessity of it to the existence and well-being of the state—yea, to the prevention of utter anarchy and wretchedness—which no one in his senses can doubt, dispute or deny. Sup-

pose what else we may, either in respect to him who governs or those who are governed; the authority of law must be recognized and maintained, or all is lost. Whatever sacrifice may be involved—whatever may be lost or gained, this one thing—this indispensable means of the public weal must be maintained. And who does not understand the nature, the design, the necessity of civil government? Who does not know, that without it human society could not exist—much less attain any tolerable degree of prosperity and enjoyment? What could be done without the fundamental law, claiming submission to authority—and what would this law be without authority sustained by sanctions—without judges, courts, trials, executive officers, sentences passed and executed, and a *sovereign will*, from which the whole emanates.\*

I might exhibit the same thing, as it shows itself and its necessity, in lower and feebler forms, in all the relations of life. In our friendships, how much depends on the discharge of certain duties; how are we held under responsibility, and failing here, how are we judged unworthy, and cast away. In neighborhood intercourse, in private circles, in the forms of politeness, and even in street civilities, who does not know, what it is to be responsible to the will of another, who does not know that in these matters there is a law, that a record is kept, that offenders are marked, that there is a tribunal, a judgment and a retribution? Indeed were there two, and only two voluntary beings in the universe, in all respects equals and existing together for their mutual well-being, the will of one in certain respects, would be law to the will of the other, involving the right to enforce it, and with power involving an actual enforcement, by appropriate sanctions. It is the right of one in many cases, to have his will done by another; and, wherever this right exists, especially with power to enforce it, we have an exemplification of the essential characteristics of moral government, whether this right extends to an individual, a family, an empire or a universe.

We all know then, what moral government is, and that men cannot exist in society without it. In that form of it called civil government, the lowest culprit in his prison knows its

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\* In a representative government, I need hardly say, that the sovereign will is that of the people manifested through their representatives.

general nature, its principles, its end, and its absolute necessity to this end, as well as the judge who condemns him. Not one of us, if we could not rely on its protection, would dare to go through the streets of our city. Without moral government, we should no sooner venture into human society than venture into a den of wolves. These things are enough to show how necessary moral government is to man, and how well too the thing itself is understood by man.

But if neither parental nor civil government furnishes a perfect specimen of moral government, how can one know in what its perfection consists; or what such a government would be in the hands of a Being of infinite perfection?

I answer that we are able to trace with entire accuracy the essential imperfections of every human specimen, and thus to determine what is essential to constitute a perfect moral government. Knowing the end of a moral government, what is fitted to defeat it, and to a greater or less extent, what is adapted to that end and necessary to it, we can to this extent decide, what is not and what is, essential to the perfection of such a system. Man may not be qualified to give absolute perfection to such a system, but it does not follow that he cannot conceive of its perfection. Suppose that an absolutely perfect watch has never been made, and never can be by man, does it therefore follow, that it is not easy to conceive of such perfection as within the reach of the power and skill which man does not possess; or that man himself cannot specify the very changes in the materials or the structure, which would give it absolute perfection? What is supposable in such a case, we claim to be true in that under consideration. We are so well acquainted with the subject, that we know wherein the imperfection in the work of man consists, and can trace it to its cause. We know so well, what are the true object and end of a moral government, we know so well that by some things that end must be defeated, and we know so well that other things are perfectly adapted to secure that end; we know so well wherein all human forms of moral government are imperfect, and so well that such deficiencies could not mar a moral government in the hands of an infinitely perfect Being; we know so well what are the principles of moral action, and what are the means most perfectly fitted to influence moral beings—in short, we know so many things, that we can be at no loss

to decide what a moral government must be in all essential respects, when administered by a perfect God.

I am not saying, that we can tell *all* that God will or will not do in such an administration, but that we can decide what he will and will not do, in certain important and essential respects. I hope to show you, that there is truth on this subject which man can know, and from which, in its bearings on his immortal interests he cannot escape, and that while there is such a God as Jehovah is clearly revealed, we are not doomed to look out on his ways and his doings as on chaos and darkness, but that, with an effulgence as broad as his own creation, and as clear as the light which is poured over it, he shows an end and a system of means worthy of such an author—a moral creation, comprising beings made in his own image, with tendencies and sure results that will “answer the great idea of him who made it.”

I assume, then, what I shall hereafter attempt to prove, and what is properly assumed for the purpose of explanation, that a moral system, or a community of moral beings, as distinguished from any other system not moral, is the best means of the best end, and that a perfect moral government over such a community is the necessary means of accomplishing this end, and is therefore dictated and demanded by perfect benevolence. I now propose to define and explain what I intend by A PERFECT MORAL GOVERNMENT; and to justify the definition.

By a perfect moral government I intend—

THE INFLUENCE OF THE AUTHORITY, OR OF THE RIGHTFUL AUTHORITY OF A MORAL GOVERNOR ON MORAL BEINGS, DESIGNED SO TO CONTROL THEIR ACTION AS TO SECURE THE GREAT END OF ACTION ON THEIR PART, THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF LAW.

In explaining and justifying this definition, I propose to consider the several parts of it, more or less extensively, as the case may seem to require.

I. A moral government is an influence *on moral beings*, or, on *beings capable of moral action*.

While this will be readily admitted, there are some things involved in it, which demand consideration. One is, that the influence of moral government being an influence on moral beings and designed to control moral action, is as diverse in its nature from the influence of physical causes, as moral

action is from a physical effect; or as a moral cause is from a physical cause. It is an influence, which is designed and fitted to give, not the necessity, but merely the certainty of its effect; and which leaves the moral liberty of the subject unimpaired. Hence, it is not essential to this influence that it actually secure the kind of action which it is fitted to secure. A perfect moral government may exist with all its influence, and yet be wholly counteracted in its designed effect on its subjects, since it is obvious that such a government may be maintained over subjects in revolt as well as over subjects who are loyal. Rebellion against government, cannot exist when there is no government. A perfect moral government then, as a government over moral beings, in respect to any cause of action giving the necessity of action, leaves every subject as free to perform the action which it aims to prevent, as to perform that which it aims to secure.

II. A perfect moral government implies a *moral governor*.

In this respect a moral government differs from a *moral system*, as a species differs from a genus. A moral system may be conceived to exist either with or without a moral governor. We can conceive of moral beings, who should act under the direct influence of motives, so far as these reach the mind in the perceived nature, tendencies and consequences of action, though there were no influence of a superior being sustaining the relation of a ruler or moral governor. The direct influence of motives, as these are thus apprehended by the mind, and that influence which results from the character and relation of a moral governor, though different, may yet coexist; and either may be supposed to exist without the other. The former without the latter would simply imply a moral system without a moral government. The latter with or without the former, would imply a moral system in that particular form which includes a moral government. The peculiar influence therefore, which arises from the character and relation of a moral governor, whether other influences combine with it or not, is the essential constituting influence of moral government. So far as moral beings act under the peculiar influences of a moral governor, so far and no farther, do they act under the influence of moral government.

III. The influence of a perfect moral government is *designed*

*so to control the action of moral beings, as to secure the great end of action on their part.*

It will be admitted that this influence is designed to control the action of moral beings in relation to some end which depends on their action in a community of such beings, and which is the best end, and in this sense the great end of such action. What then, is this end? I answer—It is the production of well-being, even the highest well-being of all, and the prevention of misery, even the highest misery of all. A moral being is capable of performing two and only two kinds of moral action, and as a subject of moral government, is under an absolute necessity of performing one or the other in all action. He cannot, as a moral being, be inactive. His nature and relations necessarily exclude alike inaction and all neutrality of action, or action in which he does not act morally.—Again, the nature—the peculiar powers and properties of a moral being—show that he is qualified to perform, what no other being is qualified to perform—that kind of action, which tends to produce the best conceivable end of all action, the highest conceivable well-being of all sentient beings, both of himself and of all others. It is this nature of a moral being, which gives to his existence its peculiar value—its pre-eminent worth, compared with the nature of any other being. It is this, which, as a creature, raises man to companionship with his Creator and with creatures the most exalted, and brings him under obligation to act with them in principle, in purpose and in all subordinate and executive doings, for the accomplishment of the great end of all action here on earth, and amid the scenes of eternity.

Exalted thus by his nature as a moral being, he is by the same nature qualified to act in a manner which tends to defeat the great end of his creation, and to bring on himself and on all other beings, unmingled and perfect misery. And, what adds inconceivable importance to such a being is, that he cannot avoid, as we have said, acting in one or the other of these two modes of acting now specified. Even in every subordinate action, he acts from principle, he acts with or in the form of, a supreme elective preference. These existing together are often called his action; and its tendency as moral action is the tendency of his action in its principle; or rather,

the tendency of the action in principle is its true tendency.\* To neglect to act in that mode which is fitted to secure the great and true end of all action on his part, viz., the highest well-being of all—is not only to sacrifice and defeat that end, but it is necessarily to act in that mode, which in its true tendency is fitted to produce the opposite result—the highest misery of all.

Every thing of real significance in the being of a moral agent, viewed in relation to himself and to other beings, every thing virtuous and praiseworthy in the use of his exalted powers, every thing vicious and blamable in the abuse of them, every thing that is dignified and honorable, every thing that is mean and disgraceful, every thing that affords inward peace and triumph, every thing that brings remorse and despair—every good and every evil to himself and to others—all, all depends on action. The highest happiness and the highest misery of all, all that blesses and all that curses, life and death, are in the power of action. Such issues, according to the true nature and tendencies of things, depend on the action of moral beings.

Here, then, the design of a perfect moral government is manifest. The design of the pendulum of a clock to control and direct its motion, so as to mark the divisions of time as the true end of the machine, is not more obvious than is the design of a perfect moral government so to control the action of moral beings, as to secure the great end of action on their part, viz., the production of the highest well-being of all, and the prevention of the highest misery of all.

IV. The influence of a perfect moral government is *the influence of authority*.

By the influence of authority, I mean that influence which results from that right to command, which is founded in competence and disposition to govern in the best manner, and which imposes an obligation to obey. In other words, it is the influence of a right to command which imposes an ob-

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\* A man may, in subordinate action, love his children, and seek their temporal welfare. But if in so doing, he prefers as he may, this welfare of his children, or any other limited good, to the highest well-being of all, then his action as a whole tends to destroy the highest well-being of all, and to produce their highest misery. For such action is essentially constituted by a principle, which would produce this twofold result, rather than sacrifice the welfare of the children.

ligation to obey, as this right results from competence and disposition to give and maintain the best law. Intelligent voluntary beings never act voluntarily without acting from a regard to their own well-being. Instead however, of relying wholly, or even partially on their own wisdom or judgment, in respect to the best mode of action, or the mode in which they ought to act, they may rely partially or even wholly on the decision of superior wisdom and superior goodness. It is true, that the subjects of a moral government may possess such knowledge of the nature and tendency of action on their part, as to know, irrespectively of any decision of the moral governor, that their own highest well-being as well as that of all others can be secured only by conformity to the law of his government. In this way natural good and evil as directly known to result from the nature and tendency of different kinds of action, may concur with the influence of authority to secure their conformity to the law. But in that conformity to law which is secured by the single influence of natural good and evil as motives, there is no recognition of the moral governor's authority. The influence of authority is not the direct influence of natural good and evil reaching the mind through the known nature and tendency of action. It is that influence which results from one's having a right to command by virtue of the superior power, wisdom and goodness, which qualify him to govern in the best manner. So far as this influence reaches moral beings, whether resisted or unresisted by them, they are under the influence of moral government. Where this influence does not exist, there is nothing which can be called moral government.

Of the truth of the present position, the slightest attention to the subject will satisfy us. If we suppose a parent or a civil ruler to be without that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey, we cannot regard him as having authority, or as administering a moral government—or at most only in pretense. Nor can we suppose one to possess this right and exercise it through the medium of law, without admitting the existence of that which is called a moral government. It is then, this influence—the influence that results from the right to command which imposes an obligation to obey, which is an essential element of moral government. This is the influence of authority.

The nature of this influence will be more manifest if we look at the basis or source of the right, viz., the competence and disposition of one to govern in the best manner. These qualifications vest him with the right to govern, as they furnish or constitute *the evidence or proof* that he will govern in the best manner, or that his law is the best law, and will be sustained as a decisive rule of action to subjects. Such a governor ought to be obeyed. Moral obligation is the binding influence of that necessity, which a moral being is under of performing that action which is decisively proved to be the best action, or to be best fitted to the great end of all action on his part, viz., the highest well-being of all, both of others and of himself. Now the competence and disposition of the moral governor to give and maintain the best law, is decisive proof that the law which he gives is the best law, and that the action which he requires is the best fitted to the great end of all action, and as such is the best and necessary means of the best end. These qualifications of the moral governor therefore, *as decisive proof* that he will govern in the best manner, become a ground of obligation on the part of subjects to obey his law.

It is true that the subject, in submitting to the influence of authority, acts from a desire of the highest well-being of others and of himself, as truly as he would, were he influenced by the knowledge of the nature and tendency of action irrespectively of the influence of authority. The two influences may and often do coexist. Still, they are different influences. If the nature and tendency of action, as directly apprehended by the mind, or learned by experience, may be one kind of evidence, the character of an infinitely perfect lawgiver may be another kind of evidence that the action required is the best kind of action. If evidence from both sources exists, then the highest evidence supposable in the case exists. If, however, we suppose the evidence from the character of the lawgiver only exists, this is sufficient and decisive evidence that the action required by his law is the best action, and ought to be done. That this evidence is peculiarly fitted to impress the human mind, when compared with any other, we may have occasion to show hereafter. Be this as it may, the exclusive competence and disposition of the moral governor to give and maintain the best law being fully evinced, consti-

tute sufficient and decisive proof that the law requires the best kind of action. This fact being established, the necessity of the action required to the great end of all action, viz., the highest well-being of all, is also established. This necessity of the action required, results in the obligation of the agent to perform the action. Without the manifest necessity of the action to the great end of all action, nothing can be conceived to be true of it which can bind the agent to its performance. With the necessity of the action to this end, nothing can be conceived to set aside his obligation to its performance. So far therefore, as there is any thing in respect to the character or the relation of a moral governor, which creates obligation to obedience on the part of subjects, it is the manifestation of his competence and disposition to govern in the best manner, as a proof that he will so govern.

In opposition to the view now maintained, the right to govern is supposed by some to rest on other grounds than competence and disposition to govern in the best manner. Thus, the right, in certain cases, is supposed to rest on some peculiar relation. For example, the right of the parent to govern his children, is supposed to rest simply on the relation of the parent. This is obviously mistaking the evidence of the right for the basis of the right. Every such general doctrine or truth as that now referred to, must be determined by some general principle. The general principle, that parents will govern their children better than others will govern them, is justly inferred from the parental relation, and is therefore, the true basis or ground of the parents' right. This is obvious; for if we reverse the principle—if we adopt the principle that others than parents will govern children better than parents, the right to govern them would rest in other hands. Again, it is often maintained that the right of a Creator to govern his creatures, rests simply on his relation as their Creator. The error in this case must be obvious to every one who distinguishes this single relation from the moral character of a Creator. If we suppose him, then, to be a selfish or malignant being, having only the designs of such a being to accomplish by the conduct of his creatures, how could the mere act of creation give him the right to govern? He could not possess even the right to create beings for his own selfish purposes; how then, could submission to the will of such a Creator be the

duty of his creatures?\*

It is true that the act of creation may by its effects be supposed to evince the goodness of the Creator, and so become evidence of his qualification to govern in the best manner, and the ground of his rightful authority. But the act of creation may also by its effects be supposed to evince the malignity of the Creator, or to leave his designs and his character in concealment and in doubt. The act of creation does not necessarily involve his goodness. The act of creation therefore, simply considered, cannot be an adequate basis for the right to govern.

To sustain the right of civil jurisdiction, various expedients have been resorted to, all of which confirm the view now maintained. Thus "the divine right of kings" has been a favorite doctrine; and to exhibit and enforce the right to rule, civil rulers have assumed the exalted titles of "sacred majesty," "God's vice-regent," "God's anointed," "God's representative;" have claimed descent from gods, and exacted divine worship, and have pretended to have secret intercourse with some divinity, or to be gods themselves. All this clearly betrays the principle now maintained, as that which in the view of those who govern and of those who are governed, is the true basis of the right to govern.

Some evidently rest the right to govern by law simply on the power to execute its sanctions. This theory obviously places the entire influence of moral government in the influence of natural good and of natural evil, as the one is promised to obedience and the other threatened to disobedience; viewed only as motives to persuade to the one and dissuade from the other. According to this view, might gives right, and the veriest tyrant with power to execute the sanctions of law, combined with the most fell malignity, has a righteous claim for the unqualified submission of his subjects. On this scheme there can be no fixed standard, no permanent and essential elements of right and wrong moral action. All moral distinctions are subverted, and any being having the power, would have the right to fill the universe with misery. This monstrous theory of moral government is the legitimate consequence of the selfishness of this selfish world, looking only at natural good and evil in the form of legal reward and

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\* Cicero says, that all religious and pious affection must cease, if love and benevolence be denied to God.—*DE NAT. DEORUM* I., 144.

penalty, as the only motives to secure obedience and prevent disobedience to law. No account is made of the essential element of a moral government, *the influence of authority*. The right to govern, which results from competence and disposition to govern in the best manner—the right which imposes an obligation to obey, is unknown, and obedience and disobedience to a moral governor as having this right, are impossible.

## REMARK.

In view of the nature of rightful authority, how desirable it is that men should be placed under this influence.

# WHAT IS A PERFECT MORAL GOVERNMENT?

## LECTURE II.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.—  
The nature of such a law.

First, It is a decisive rule of action to subjects.

Secondly, It must require benevolence as the best kind of action, and must forbid selfishness as the worst kind of action.

Viewed in relation to these objects, and to the agent who exercises them, these affections are supreme, intelligent, morally free, permanent, and predominant.

I HAVE said that a moral government is—I. An influence on moral beings; II. That it implies a moral governor; III. That it is designed so to control the action of moral beings, as to secure the great end of action on their part; IV. That it is the influence of authority. I now proceed to say—

V. That a perfect moral government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.

Here the question arises, *what is law—the law of a perfect moral government?*

Generally speaking, the law of a perfect moral government, is the will of the moral governor concerning the action of his subjects, promulgated as an authoritative and perfect rule of action to them. In this general answer to the question, there would be perhaps a universal agreement in opinion, while in respect to its particular import, there might be diversity. Hence the question demands an answer in several important particulars. I proceed, then, to say—

That the law of a perfect moral government, *is the promulgated will of the moral governor, as a decisive rule of action to his subjects, requiring benevolence on their part as the best kind of action, and as the sum of obedience, forbidding selfishness on their part as the worst kind of action and the sum of disobedience, expressing his preference of the action required to its opposite all things considered, his satisfaction with obedience and with nothing but obedience on the part of subjects, and his*

*highest approbation of obedience and highest disapprobation of disobedience; and including the appropriate sanctions of the moral governor's authority.*

This definition of the law of a perfect moral government, I shall attempt to support in the following particular propositions:

1. The law of a perfect moral government is the *promulgated* will of the moral governor as a *decisive rule* of action to his subjects. The will of the moral governor must be promulgated, that it may be known by the subject, since there can be no obligation on the part of the latter to obey the will of the former, if it cannot be known. At the same time, the will of the lawgiver being clearly promulgated, ignorance of the law becomes voluntary, and can be no excuse for disobedience. This will must be promulgated as a *decisive rule of action to subjects*. Beings who have the prerogative of deciding the question of duty for themselves irrespectively of the decision or will of another, are not under law to another. A rule of action propounded to others for consideration, leaving the question of duty wholly to their judgment of the nature and tendency of action, is not a law. Law differs widely from wholesome counsel or good advice; and one of its essential characteristics is, that it is a rule of action, determining what ought to be done. Without this conception of a rule of action, that of law cannot be formed. Law, therefore, instead of leaving the question of duty to the judgment of its subjects, to be founded on other evidence, is an authoritative decision of the question, from which there is no appeal.

This conception of law is founded in the truth of things. The right to command which imposes an obligation to obey, results from competence and disposition to give and maintain the best law. When a rightful sovereign therefore, in the form of promulgated law decides what the subject ought to do, the right of the subject to rejudge the decision, or to decide for himself, is wholly superseded. Whatever other rights real or imaginary, the subject may be supposed to possess in other circumstances, as a subject of law, he can possess none which is inconsistent with this right of the sovereign. The right to rule vests in him, because its exercise by him is necessary to the general good. As the subject then, can possess no right inconsistent with the general good, so he can possess

none inconsistent with that right of the sovereign, which is demanded by the general good. He cannot therefore even raise the question of duty, without usurping a right which he has not—nay more, without invading a right which pertains exclusively to the sovereign—one of the most sacred and inviolable of all rights, the right of deciding that action or conduct of subjects, on which the highest well-being of each and of all depends. To suppose otherwise, is to divest the law of a rightful sovereign of its peculiar and essential characteristic as a rule of action, and to degrade it to the level of mere advice. It is to commit the question of what ought to be done by the subject, to the incompetent judgment and self-will of one who is bound to conform his decision to that of unerring wisdom and goodness. It is to suppose, that the subject of the best law is not bound to obey it, but has a right to disobey it, and to make war on the general good. Law then, the law of a perfect moral government, decides—settles the question of duty on the part of its subjects, by superseding absolutely and wholly the right of decision on their part.

2. The law of a perfect moral government must require benevolence as the best kind of action, and forbid selfishness as the worst kind of action on the part of moral beings.

The general proposition, that benevolence is the best kind of action, and selfishness the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of moral beings, can scarcely be supposed to need the support of formal argument. In this general view of the two kinds of action however, the mind, we think, but imperfectly appreciates the intrinsic worth of the one as *moral* worth, and the intrinsic evil of the other as *moral* evil. A thorough and successful analysis of the essential elements which constitute the one the best, and the other the worst kind of action on the part of moral beings, will, I think, greatly serve to heighten our estimate of the moral worth, excellence, and rectitude of the one, and of the moral evil, pravity, and turpitude of the other, and thus reveal more distinctly to our admiration the attractive lineaments and clustering beauties of the one, and to our abhorrence the repulsive aspect and manifold deformities of the other.

It is proposed then, for the purpose of showing that a perfect moral government must require benevolence, and forbid selfishness on the part of its subjects, to show, by unfolding

some of the essential elements of these only two kinds of moral action, that the one is the best and the other the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of a moral being, inasmuch as one is perfectly or in the highest degree fitted to prevent the highest misery, and to produce the highest well-being of all other sentient beings, and of the agent himself; and the other is perfectly or in the highest degree fitted to prevent the highest well-being, and to produce the highest misery of all other sentient beings, and of the agent himself.

I propose to consider these different acts of a moral being:

(1.) *As they are related to other sentient beings than the agent;* and,

(2.) *As they are related to the agent himself.*

Let us, then, contemplate these acts—

(1.) *As they are related to other sentient beings than the agent.*

I here remark—

In the first place, that each of these acts is a *supreme* affection; in other words, it is an *elective preference of its object as supreme*. By this, I mean to distinguish each of these acts, not only from the other characteristics above specified, and from all involuntary or constitutional preferences, but even from all subordinate and executive preferences which are voluntary or elective.

Benevolence then, as the act of a moral being, is an elective preference of the highest well-being of all other sentient beings as *his supreme object*. Selfishness, as the act of a moral being, is an elective preference of the world,\* as *his supreme object*. To explain further, every elective preference of an object *as supreme*, is a choice between those objects and those only which can come into competition as objects of election or choice, and also a preference of every object which is implied in or necessary to the existence of the supreme object. Now, with the object of the benevolent preference, viz., the highest good of all other sentient beings, the highest good of the agent can never come into competition as an ob-

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\* By the term *world*, I here mean every possible good, which as an object of choice by a moral being, can come into competition with the highest well-being, and with what is necessary to or implied in the highest well-being of all other sentient beings.

ject of election or choice, for the highest well-being of the agent depends on the highest well-being, or rather on his choice of the highest well-being of all other beings. But with the exception of his own highest well-being, and with what is necessary to or involved in it (*e. g.*, his own virtue, which cannot be an object of choice\*), every other good to the agent, including the non-existence of evil in many forms, even all worldly good can come into competition with the highest well-being of all other beings as an object of preference. The benevolent preference then, is not, and cannot be a preference to the highest well-being of all other beings, to the agent's own highest well-being, nor of his own highest well-being to the highest well-being of all other beings. It is a preference of the highest well-being of all other beings, to all other good, including the non-existence of all evil, which can come into competition with their highest well-being as an object of choice. In this preference therefore, the agent prefers the highest well-being of all other beings to any and every good, including the non-existence of all evil, which can be preferred by him to their highest well-being. It is, of course, not indeed an uninterested, but a *disinterested* affection, it being its true nature and tendency as a benevolent preference, to sacrifice all good, and to submit to and incur all evil, on his part, which can be necessary to secure the highest well-being of all other beings. Nor does it stop here. A moral being, in preferring the highest well-being of all other sentient beings as *his supreme object*, prefers every thing to its opposite, which is necessary to or implied in the existence of this object of his preference. Particularly he prefers to its opposite, every thing in their condition and circumstances which is necessary to the existence of this object, especially the perfect virtue of all other *moral* beings, as the known necessary means of their highest well-being. He also prefers to their opposites, the non-existence of the highest misery, and of all misery or unhappiness on the part of all others, with the non-existence of all causes and means of these evils; especially he thus prefers the non-existence of the vice or wickedness of all

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\* One's own virtue may be the object of a *constitutional* preference to its opposite, but not of an *elective* preference or choice, since this would imply the absurdity of choosing his choice.

other moral beings, as the cause or means of their highest misery. Thus we see the perfect adaptation of benevolence, considered as an *elective* preference of the highest well-being of all other beings as supreme, to secure this object, unclogged by any regard of the agent to his own highest well-being, and to any less happiness on his part, and involving a preference to its opposite of every thing else which can be necessary to, or implied in the existence of the object of his preference, the highest well-being of all other sentient beings.

We shall now see, that from the nature of selfishness as an elective preference of its object as supreme, the facts are far otherwise. With the object of the selfish preference, viz., the world, as the supreme object, the highest well-being of the agent, the highest well-being of all other sentient beings, and the non-existence of the highest misery of all such beings, are necessarily in competition as objects of choice. The agent in preferring the world as his supreme object, necessarily prefers the non-existence of his own highest well-being to the non-existence of the highest well-being, and the existence of the highest misery of all other sentient beings, to the absence or non-existence of the object of his selfish preference. Nor is this all. A moral being in preferring the world as his supreme object, necessarily prefers every thing else to its opposite, which can be necessary to, or implied in the attainment of his supreme object. He therefore prefers to its opposite every thing in the condition and circumstances of all other sentient beings, which can be necessary to the attainment of his object; particularly the non-existence of the perfect virtue, and the existence of the perfect vice or wickedness of all other moral beings, together with the non-existence of all other causes or means of their happiness, and the existence of all other causes or means of their unhappiness or misery, to the absence, or non-existence of his supreme object. It is of course the true tendency of the selfish preference on the part of a moral being, to destroy all good—all happiness and the means of it, and to produce all evil—all misery and the means of it—on the part of all other sentient beings, which may be necessary to secure the object of the preference.

This view of selfishness as a principle of action on the part of a moral being, is abundantly recognized in the language of common life, particularly in that of the Scriptures. (Vid. JAS.

iv. 4.)\* It places its object—the world—above every other object in its affections; and will therefore destroy the highest good and produce the highest misery of all other beings, if necessary to the accomplishment of its object. Though it may not always reveal itself in the form of malice or hate, still it lives and acts in the mind with constant and reckless neglect and contempt, and therefore with practical opposition and hostility to all other good than its own object. It is, of course, as a principle of action, nothing but a principle of *malevolence*, in the only true and essential form of malevolence. Such is it in its essential nature; nor is it less odious and destructive because, though it assume not the mere terrific form of infuriate malice or hate in its overt doings, it carries on its work with heartless indifference and open scorn for the highest good, and the highest misery of all other beings.

Thus, each of these two kinds of moral action—benevolence and selfishness—considered simply as an *elective* preference of its object *as supreme*, places that object in choice, in affection and in purpose, above every other object, which can come into competition with it as an object to be sought. It involves, of course, an unqualified determination—a full purpose of heart—to sacrifice any good, the sacrifice of which, and to produce any evil, the production of which, may be necessary for the accomplishment of its object. At the same time, no state of mind on the part of a moral being is of such sure and infallible tendency as a cause, to go out into the full production of its effect, as the elective preference of an object *as supreme*. Nor does a moral being aim at or seek any object as supreme, except in either the benevolent or the selfish preference. All other acts of will, on the part of such a being fix on their objects in subservience to the accomplishment of his supreme object; and therefore terminate in these objects. It is only in the elective preference of an object as supreme, that a moral being so fixes his will upon, and so directs his affections to that object—so concentrates thought, and desire, and feeling upon it, as to be unqualifiedly willing—even fully determined, to sacrifice any and every good, and to incur any and every evil which may be necessary to the attainment of that object. But this he

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\* "The friendship of the world is enmity against God." "The minding of the flesh is enmity against God."

does in each elective preference of an object as supreme, Benevolence then, as an elective preference of its object as supreme, is in one respect the action and the only action of a moral being, which is perfectly fitted to prevent the highest misery, and in its stead, to produce the highest well-being of all other sentient beings; and selfishness, as an elective preference of its object as supreme, is, in one respect, the action and the only action of a moral being, which is perfectly fitted to prevent the highest well-being, and to produce the highest misery of all other sentient beings. Benevolence, then, as *an elective act*, and as related to other beings, is the best kind of action in this respect, and selfishness as an *elective act*, and as related to other beings, is in this respect, the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of a moral being.

I remark—

In the second place; that each of these moral acts is an *intelligent* preference of its object as supreme. By this, I mean, that in each of these elective preferences, the mind acts with an intellectual apprehension of the objects of its choice. In either case, the will and the affections are fixed on an object as supreme, not with ignorance, but with knowledge;—not amid the darkness of error, but under the light of truth. The agent, whether he acts for weal or for woe, knows what he is doing. He has apprehended the two great objects of moral choice, their nature, relations and tendencies. All that knowledge or truth can do, is done. He knows the object at which he aims, in distinction from that at which he does not aim. The end at which he aims—the end to be accomplished, is clearly to be distinguished from the end not to be accomplished; and is ever held in distinct vision before him. Thus every conceivable security is furnished, that his supreme object will never be mistaken;—that his supreme object, or any thing involved in or necessary to its existence, will not be forgotten or lost sight of; nor in any way neglected by being unthought of or out of mind; nor that the opposite object will be sought in its stead. What higher or more invaluable security than this, can be given, that the benevolent preference will act for, and thus accomplish its object—and what higher or more fearful security than this, that the selfish preference will act for, and thus secure its object? How salutary and excellent the intellectual element in the one; how de-

destructive and fatal the same element in the other! And further—by this intellectual element—this adequate, and constant, and sure apprehension of the object of the preference, the mind is prepared to decide at once, to a vast extent, with its prior knowledge of subordinate, executive actions, the fitness of such action to promote or to defeat its supreme object. How is this decision, in a vast majority of cases, made with the quickness of instinct; and on this account, is the fitness of the benevolent preference to good, and the fitness of the selfish preference to evil, increased! Thus it may be said, that all that is valuable in being wise to do good, is combined in the one, and all that is destructive in being wise to do evil, is combined in the other, as each is an *intelligent* preference. Indeed, were it not so, the mind could have no supreme object or end. It would have no steady aim, and could be guided by nothing. It would be like a ship in the darkest tempest, without helm or compass; while this constant intellectual apprehension and aim clears away every cloud, lights up the star of direction, and like the unerring needle, ascertains and guides the course. Being thus an intelligent act—combining the perfect employment of the intellect for its own purpose, how is the fitness of each moral preference to secure its object, perfected in another respect? It is the benignant tendency and fitness of the benevolent preference, active with unqualified and unerring aim for its object in the light of truth; and it is the malignant tendency and fitness of the selfish preference, active with unqualified and unerring aim for its object, under the same light! One is the act of a moral being, with the knowledge of good and evil, aiming to prevent misery, even the highest misery, and to produce the highest good of all other beings; the other is the act of a moral being with the knowledge of good and evil, aiming to destroy the highest good, and to produce the highest misery of all other beings! As *intelligent* action then, benevolence, in another respect, is the best kind of action, and selfishness the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of a moral being.

I remark—

In the third place, that each of the elective preferences under consideration, is a *morally free* action. A moral being has power to make either of these preferences in the circumstances in which he acts, instead of the other; and is also

under an absolute necessity of making the one or the other. By making one therefore, he prevents the other in the only possible way of preventing it. Now each of these elective preferences has its peculiar tendency—the one its beneficial tendency, the other its destructive tendency—considered simply as an elective preference of its object as supreme; and so it would be, though the actual opposite of each preference were nothing more than its own non-existence. But the actual opposite of each is not its own non-existence. A morally free being is not merely under the necessity of making one of these preferences or not making it, that is, of making one or making no preference. If he does not make the one, he does and must make the other. Make which he may, he does more than make it—he prevents the opposite preference which otherwise must be made. Moral agency must serve one of two masters, when by serving one *his* designs are accomplished, while the same service, preventing all service to the other, defeats his designs.

In this view, free agency is the grand, not to say the most momentous element in the nature of a moral being, as related to the happiness and misery of other beings. By giving existence to one positive cause, whether of immense good or immense evil to them—to one of which such a being must give existence—he prevents the other. If a free moral agent makes the *benevolent preference*, he not only gives existence to a positive cause of immense good to all other beings, but in so doing he prevents the selfish preference in its stead, and so prevents a positive cause fitted to destroy all happiness, and to produce the highest misery of all other beings. If such a being makes the *selfish preference*, he not only gives existence to a cause of immense evil to other beings, but in so doing he prevents the benevolent preference in its stead, and so prevents a cause fitted to prevent all misery, and to produce the highest well-being of all other beings.

We are familiar with the precept, "Cease to do evil, and learn to do well." Now, were a moral being merely to cease to do evil, the simple act of ceasing from another action so fitted to destroy happiness, and to produce misery, would possess high worth and excellence. In like manner, great pravity and turpitude would pertain to the simple act of ceasing to do well. ' But, acting morally, he can no more

cease to do evil, without doing well, than darkness can cease without light; and he can no more cease to do well, without doing evil, than light can cease without darkness. There is for a moral being, no neutral ground to stand on. A moral being must be good, or he must be wicked. He must be for the greatest good, or against it. He must be benevolent or he must be selfish. Such is the nature of free moral agency, that he must prevent himself from being the one by being the other; that by becoming in principle an angel of mercy, he must prevent himself from becoming in principle a demon in malignity; and by becoming in principle a demon of malignity, he must prevent himself from becoming in principle an angel of mercy. In this respect then, what worth and excellence in the one kind of action, what pravity and turpitude in the other! Benevolence, on the part of a moral being, prevents selfishness, with all its fitness to cause ruin and wretchedness and woe to all other beings. Selfishness, on the part of a moral being, prevents benevolence, with its fitness to prevent the highest misery, and to secure the highest good of all other beings. What else than benevolence can prevent a cause of so much evil? What else than selfishness can prevent a cause of so much good? As morally free action then, viewed as related in this respect to the happiness and misery of other beings, benevolence is the best kind of action, and selfishness is the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of a moral being.

I remark—

In the fourth place, that each of the elective preferences of which I speak, is a *permanent* state of mind. By this I do not mean that it is immutable, nor that it never changes; but that it remains in all practical doings. Indeed, when once formed, it never changes, nor can change, unless the mind changes *de novo* between the two great objects of moral choice. This the mind is exceedingly unapt to do, chiefly because the preference of an object as supreme, has a peculiar tendency to perpetuate itself, by confining thought and feeling to its object, and engrossing the whole mind with it. It thus strengthens feeling, and strengthens itself, and becomes *permanent*, so far as it can be, with a physical possibility and yet with the lowest probability of change. It is with these qualifications to be viewed as an *abiding* or *fixed*, as

opposed to a *fitful* or *fluctuating* state of mind. As soon as it exists, and without use or custom, it is a supreme affection fixed on its object as the chief good—as the portion of the soul—and is thus in its very beginning what philosophers have called it—a *habit* of the mind—in one form of it, the *ἔθος νοητικόν* of Pythagoras, or “the habit of what ought to be.” It is formed to be *permanent*—to be engrossed with and ever intent on its object—to be ever present in the mind in relation to its object, that its object may never be disregarded, nor fail to be attained for want of constancy or fixedness of affection. Here then, in the *permanency* of the supreme elective preference of a moral being, we have another element of its fitness to secure its object. Without this element or characteristic, there could be no such thing as moral character, the most momentous fact in respect to moral beings, nor any manifestations of character in practical doings—none, of course, in its results of good and evil. All, in principle, would be unfixed, fitful, and fluctuating—at most an incessant series of transitions from one supreme affection or elective preference to the other. Neither would abide long enough to produce results. An essential element of moral character, whether good or bad, would be utterly wanting, because an essential element of fitness to either good or bad results would be utterly wanting. A constant fluctuation, as opposed to permanency in these preferences, would render that which has the highest conceivable worth utterly worthless, and that which is in the highest conceivable degree injurious, utterly harmless. The absolute nature of each might remain the same; but neither having a relative nature, or sustaining any relation to any being or thing, could be either useful or injurious, either good or evil, either right or wrong. Whatever be supposed in opposition to permanency in these preferences, so far as it is supposed, it annihilates all the good of the one, and all the evil of the other; for so far it annihilates its existence, while with the element of permanency in each, there is the continuance of all that is good, useful or right, in the one, and all that is evil, injurious or wrong, in the other. How then, is the peculiar and exclusive fitness of the benevolent preference to prevent the highest misery, and to promote the highest good of all other sentient beings perfected by its permanency in the mind of the agent? How, by the same element of the selfish preference, is disclosed

its peculiar and exclusive fitness to destroy the highest good, and to produce the highest misery of all other beings? Who does not see in the permanency of the benevolent principle a signal worth and excellence to approve and admire; and in the same characteristic of the selfish principle, a signal deformity and odiousness to disapprove and abhor? The benevolent preference once formed by a moral being partakes as it were of his own immortality, and still lives and still acts to carry out its own blessed issues forever. The selfish preference formed by the same being, alike ceaseless in its activity and duration, remains to accomplish its results in wretchedness and woe forever. Who shall measure *the worth of permanence* in the one, and *the fearfulness of permanence* in the other? The one, like the principle of self-preservation, which every moment guards and perpetuates life and its blessings, is ever present to guard and promote the highest well-being of a sentient universe; the other, alike permanent and effective, is ever present to devastate and make wretched that universe. As *permanent* action then, and viewed in relation to the happiness and misery of all other beings, benevolence is the best kind of action, and selfishness is the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of a moral being.

I remark—

In the fifth place, that each of the elective preferences under consideration, is a *predominant* act or state of the mind. I call it *predominant*, as it controls and directs all other action of the being in subservience to the accomplishment of its end or object. Fixed on its object or end *as supreme*, its direct and peculiar tendency is, whether the object be good or bad, to employ every power of the agent in subordinate action for the accomplishment of its object. It brings into requisition the whole inner and outer man, the intellect, susceptibility, will, and heart, in all the various forms of thought, feeling, affection, volition, with all the powers of executive action, and all in subservience to the supreme object. The labors, the toils, and the hardships of self-denial in one case, are made easy and light by a willing mind and a ready hand, while in the other, to invade and destroy the rights, the peace, the happiness of others, is a work of alacrity and exultation. Thus an apostle suffers the loss of all things, and the hero desolates kingdoms; and each is a cheerful martyr to his

cause. Thus the supreme preference, in its true tendency, takes absolute *dominion* in the soul, and reigns with controlling sway over the entire productive energy of the agent.

While such is the peculiar and exclusive characteristic of the benevolent and selfish preference, every moral being is doomed by a necessity of nature, to place himself under the absolute dominion and control of the one or the other of these preferences. It is an ordinance of his very being, that he cannot serve both these masters, and must serve one. The preference of one of the only two objects of moral choice, excludes the other from all thought except to oppose and resist it, and therefore shuts off all controlling influence from it as an object to be attained, as it were by its utter annihilation, and so consecrates his whole being to the attainment of the supreme object. He thinks, he feels, he wills, he acts; he lives, or as the case may be, he dies for it. Such is the nature—such the tendency of each of the two great moral principles or preferences of a moral being, as a *predominant* principle. What now is it, as the benevolent—what as the selfish principle in its relation to the happiness and misery of other beings? What is it in a being, whose exaltation in the scale of being likens him to his Maker, in the nature and greatness of powers to produce results in happiness and misery? What is it for a being, like an archangel strong—strong in intellect, in emotion, in will, in executive power, to be under the constant and entire dominion of perfect benevolence;—or what instead, to be under the constant and absolute dominion of unqualified selfishness! In the one case, what high devisings and plans of wisdom, what desires and affections of heart absorbed and glowing with their object—what intensity and strength of firm resolve, what ceaseless activity of all productive energies, devoted to the prevention of the highest misery and the production of the highest well-being of all! In the other case, what a like devotion of the same exalted powers, to the destruction of the highest well-being, and the production of the highest misery of all! Look now on the actual results as real, and learn the benignant dominion of benevolence—the terrific dominion of selfishness. Survey the broad field of eternity, cheered, and brightened, and blessed with the fruits and harvests of the joyous activities of reigning benevolence; and then, the same field made desolate, and dark, and dead in the woes of reign-

ing selfishness. See in the one principle the brightest image of that infinite uncreated excellence, that makes heaven; see in the other the very spirit that would convert all into the dark world of hell. Measure now, in relation to other beings, the perfect fitness of the one to good, and the perfect fitness of the other to evil, as the predominant and reigning principle of a moral being. What so manifest in the form of absolute knowledge, as that benevolence is the best, and selfishness the worst kind of action which, on the part of such beings can be conceived.

I now proceed, as I proposed, to consider—

(2.) The nature of benevolence, and of selfishness, as the one is related to the happiness, and the other to the misery of the agent.

My design is to show, that benevolence on the part of a moral being is perfectly fitted to give him the highest happiness of which he is capable from action; and that selfishness is perfectly fitted to give him the highest misery of which he is capable from action.

These things will appear, if we consider some of the essential characteristics of each of these kinds of action.

In the first place; benevolence on the part of a moral being is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest happiness, and selfishness the highest misery, of which he is capable from the *objects* of action. By the object of action I mean all that which a moral being in the elective preference of his supreme object, may be truly said to will or choose, that is, the object itself and the necessary means of obtaining it. With this explanation of the object of action in view, I proceed to show that—

*Benevolence on the part of a moral being is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest happiness of which he is capable from any object of action.* This may be shown thus: there is no conceivable object of action from which a moral being is capable of deriving so much happiness, as from the highest happiness of all other beings, including what is necessarily involved in the existence of this object of preference, particularly the non-existence of the highest misery of all other sentient beings, and the perfect virtue of all other *moral* beings. But benevolence is the action and the only action on the part of a moral being, which is perfectly fitted to secure this object or end of action. Benevolence therefore is the action and only action on the part of a moral being, which is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest happiness of which he is capable from any

object of action. Now the necessary and perfect means of a good end, has all the worth or value of the end itself. Benevolence then, on the part of a moral being, as the necessary and perfect means of the highest well-being of all other beings, and as such the necessary and perfect means of the highest happiness to himself, of which he is capable from any object of action, has all the worth or value to him of his highest happiness from any object of action. No equal worth or value to a moral being can be conceived to pertain to any other action, on account of its relation to the object of action. Or thus: while action on the part of a moral being, which would have no object of worth or value to him, could itself have no worth or value to him, the worth or value of action on the part of such a being to him is at least equal to the worth or value to him of its object; and the worth or value to him of its object, is equal to the worth or value of the happiness of which he is capable from the object of action. In the present case, the action is benevolence; and the happiness of which the agent is capable from the object or end of the action, is the highest of which he is capable from any object or end of action. Benevolence therefore, has *to him* a worth or excellence equal to that of the highest happiness which he can derive from any object or end of action, and has, of course, the highest worth or value to him, compared with any action conceivable on his part, in relation to the object or end of action.

The same thing will appear, if we consider more particularly the import of the word *good*, or what it is that constitutes *worth, value, excellence*. The *goodness*, or the *worth*, or the *value*, or the *excellence* of a thing, is not *the absolute* nature, but the *relative* nature of that of which it is the predicate; or, more particularly, it is the real nature of that of which it is predicated, *as related to sentient being*. Even happiness itself is not *good*, or has no worth or value, except as related to a sentient being who can enjoy it. Were there no being capable of happiness, and could there in the nature of things be no such being, nothing could be *good*, nothing could possess *worth, value*, or excellence; for there could be neither happiness, nor the means of happiness, nor yet even the idea or notion of either. Nothing is good but happiness and the means of happiness, including the absence of misery and the means of its absence. Were every thing as it is—were God

and his vast creation as they are, with the single exception of all capacity of happiness and all possibility of such capacity—all would be utterly worthless. All the worth or value of man or of any other moral being, consists in his capacity of happiness and of that self-active nature which qualifies him to produce happiness to other beings and to himself. All the worth, or value, or goodness, or excellence, which pertains to action on the part of a moral being, is its fitness or adaptation to produce these results. The best kind of action, therefore, on his part, is that which is exclusively and perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of others, and his own highest happiness. This kind of action in its relation to the happiness of others, and its relation at least in one respect, to the happiness of the agent himself, is benevolence or benevolent action. This kind of action is *good*, not simply as it is perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, but also as by being thus fitted to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, it is perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of the agent, of which he is capable from any object or end of action. Its being perfectly fitted to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, constitutes its worth or value *to them*, and it is the same fitness on which the highest happiness of the agent in the case depends, and which constitutes, in one respect, the worth or value of the action *to him*; for his highest happiness, so far as it depends on the objects of action, depends on the object of this action, and so depends on the action itself, as exclusively and perfectly fitted to produce the object on which the highest happiness to himself, of which he is capable from any object of action, depends. While therefore, in the manner explained, the worth or value of the action to the agent himself, in one respect, essentially depends on or consists in the relation of the action to the highest happiness of all other beings, it also depends on the relation of the action to his own happiness. Were the agent wholly unsusceptible to happiness from the happiness of others, and as, therefore, he must be wholly indifferent to their happiness, he must be wholly indifferent to benevolence on his own part as the means of their happiness. Benevolence in such a case could possess no worth or value *to him*, either directly or indirectly. But being capable of higher happiness from the highest happiness of all other beings

than from any other object of action, and benevolence being the only action perfectly fitted to secure the highest happiness of all other beings, it is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest happiness of which he is capable from any object of action; and of course, the highest happiness of which he is capable from any action on account of its relation to the object of action.

And now, what is the *worth* or *value* of this kind of action on the part of a moral being to himself? It is not *identical* with the worth to him of the highest happiness of all other beings, or with the worth to him of his own happiness from their happiness. But the worth of the action *to him* is *equal* to the worth *to him* of either the highest happiness of all other beings, or of his own happiness from their highest happiness. The worth *to him* of the highest happiness of all other beings, is its fitness to give him the highest happiness of which he is capable from any object of action; and the worth to him of benevolent action is its perfect and exclusive fitness to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, and herein its perfect fitness to secure to him the highest happiness of which he is capable from any object of action.

Nor is it necessary to the worth or value of benevolence on the part of a moral being, that the highest happiness of all other beings, or that his own happiness as the direct effect of this object actually exist; for the action has the same nature—the same fitness to produce these results, whether they are actually produced or not. Nor in estimating the worth of benevolence to the agent are we to view him as under the controlling dominion of the selfish principle, when his susceptibilities to the happiness of others, and to his own happiness from it are rendered dormant and dead by the influence of that principle. But we are to view the mind in the perfect exercise of its powers, especially when its susceptibilities to happiness, in the full play of their perfect activity, give their perfect results. To appreciate then, the worth or value of benevolence on the part of a moral being *to himself*, we must measure the worth or value of that happiness which such a being in the perfect use of his high powers and capacities, would derive from the non-existence of the highest misery, and the existence of the highest happiness of all other beings, as the actual and true product of his own action. What a

source of happiness to a moral being were such an object. What but comparative insignificance and vanity were happiness from the only other object of action—the world—on the part of such a being. What other action on his part can afford *him* such happiness from the object of action, and possess in this respect such worth or value *to him* as that which should prevent the highest misery, and produce the highest blessedness of God and of his sentient creation. What worth, what excellence, would such a scene of moral beauty and magnificence, with all its blessedness, give to *the action* which was its true and proper cause.

I now proceed to say, that—

Selfishness on the part of a moral being is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest misery of which he is capable from any object or end of action. There is no conceivable object or end of action on the part of a moral being, from which he is capable of deriving so much misery, as from the highest misery of all other beings, including what is necessarily involved in the object of his preference; particularly, the non-existence of the highest happiness of all other beings, and the perfect vice or wickedness of all other *moral* beings. Selfishness, as we have seen, is the action and the only action of a moral being, which is perfectly fitted to secure this object, or this result of action, to other beings. Selfishness therefore is the action, and the only action on his part, which is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest misery of which he is capable from any object or end of action. Now the necessary and perfect means of a bad end, is as bad—as evil—as is the end itself, to the being whose end it is. Selfishness then, on the part of a moral being, as the only and perfect means of the highest misery of all other beings, with all that is involved in this evil, and as such a means, the only and perfect means of the highest misery of which he is capable from any object or end of action, is as great an evil *to him*, as is the object or end itself, or as is his own highest misery from any object or end of action.

The remarks already made respecting the word *good*, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to the word *evil*. The word *evil*, like the word *good*, is a relative term; that is, it denotes the nature of that of which it is a predicate, as related *to sentient being*. Even misery or suffering is evil only as related to a sentient

being, who can experience or feel it. Nothing is *evil* but misery or suffering, and the means of it, including the absence of happiness and the means of its absence. All the evil which pertains to action on the part of a moral being, is its fitness or adaptation to produce misery or suffering to other beings and to himself. The *worst* kind of action therefore on the part of a moral being, is that which is exclusively and perfectly fitted to produce the highest misery of all other beings, and his own highest misery. This kind of action in its relation to the misery of others, and in its relation at least in one respect to the misery of the agent himself, is selfishness. This kind of action is *evil*, not simply as it is perfectly fitted to produce the highest misery of all other beings, but also, as being on account of this very fitness, or in this very fitness, perfectly fitted to produce the highest misery of the agent, of which he is capable from any object or end of action. While therefore the evil nature of the action as an evil to the agent, depends on its relation to the highest misery of others, it also depends on the relation of the action to himself. Were the agent entirely unsusceptible to misery from the misery of others, and therefore necessarily entirely indifferent to their misery, he must also be utterly indifferent to selfishness on his own part as the means of their misery. Selfishness on his part, in such a case, could be no evil to *him*. It is obvious then, that one essential element of the evil of selfishness to the agent, is its perfect fitness to produce the highest misery of all other beings, and in this respect, or on this very account, its perfect fitness to give him the highest misery of which he is capable from any object or end of action; and of course the highest misery of which he is capable from any action, on account of its relation to the object or end of action.

The *evil* of this kind of action to the agent is equal either to the evil to *him* of the highest misery of all other beings, or to the evil to *him* of his own misery from their highest misery. Nor is it necessary to the intrinsic evil of the action, that the actual results in misery to others or to himself actually exist. But to appreciate the evil to himself of selfishness on the part of a moral being, we must measure the evil of that misery which such a being in the perfect unperverted action of his powers and capacities, would derive from the non-existence of the highest happiness, and the existence of the highest misery

of all other beings, as the actual product of his own action. What a source of misery to such a being, were such an object or end of action fully accomplished! What other action on his part can bring to him so much misery from the object of action, and *in this respect*, be so great an evil to him, as that action which should destroy the highest blessedness of this sentient universe, and fill it with woe?

Thus it appears, that benevolence on the part of a moral being is perfectly fitted to secure to him the highest happiness, and selfishness, the highest misery, of which he is capable *from the objects or ends of action*. Benevolence then, as related in this respect to the agent's own happiness, is to him the best kind of action, and selfishness as related in this respect to the misery of the agent, is to him the worst kind of action.

I remark—

In the second place; that benevolence on the part of a moral being is perfectly fitted to afford him the highest happiness, and selfishness, the highest misery, of which he is capable from any action, as each is *intelligent action*. This characteristic or element of the two kinds of action in its relation to the happiness and misery of all other beings than the agent, we have already considered. We now contemplate it in its relation to the happiness and misery of the agent himself. Next in degree to that happiness or that misery of which the mind is capable from the action of the will and the heart, are that happiness and that misery of which it is capable from the action of the intellect in the form of knowledge. This happiness and this misery on the part of a moral being, depend on what is known, or on the objects of knowledge, and the use made of it. Now, a moral being, in all moral action, whether he acts for good or for evil, for weal or for woe, acts intelligently. Whatever he does—whatever object he aims at, whatever results he produces, he acts not in ignorance, not under mistake, not with doubt, but with knowledge. The two great objects or ends of all moral action are known—known in their nature, known in their difference, known in all their vastness, as the highest happiness, and the highest misery of all sentient being. The will, the heart, the entire susceptibility, and productive energy—the whole man, acts not in the darkness of ignorance or error, but in the light of truth. In respect to the most momentous agency in the universe of causes, *moral action*, he knows what

is true, what is false, what is good, what is evil, according to the eternal and immutable nature of things. Act as he may, he acts with a just and adequate view and comprehension of all that need be known, that the great end of all being—of all existence may be accomplished or be defeated. And now what is such knowledge to such a being—what, if he acts morally right; what, if he acts morally wrong. Knowledge, how delightful, joyous, in the one case—how exquisitely painful in the other! How diverse these acts, with the same results, done in the darkness and blind stupidity of mere physical agencies or causes! This perfect knowledge with right moral action—such knowledge rightly used, applied, employed for its true end, we see at once is the light of life to the soul. The knowledge of all that can bless and of all that can curse a sentient universe—knowledge of all that ought to be and ought not to be, with knowledge, that all on his part which ought to be is—such knowledge is the constant associate of perfect benevolence in a moral being—in its absolute certainty, its clear and cloudless effulgence, enlightening, directing, quickening all his spiritual activities to their true result in the perfect blessedness of all—who shall value its objects, who shall measure its extent, who unfold its perfection, who utter its joys! A moral being, perfect, immortal, ever living, ever acting under the approving eye of Omniscience, and “seeing as he is seen, and knowing as he is known!”

What now, is such knowledge to a moral being of the opposite character? Knowledge consciously, deliberately, and wilfully resisted, hated, perverted—knowledge, while it excludes all ignorance that might palliate guilt or mitigate its pangs, reveals the full measure of both. Knowledge, when ignorance were bliss—light a thousand-fold more terrific than deepest darkness—light revealing a moral being to himself in the work of destroying all good, and producing all evil! What degradation in rank, what perversion of faculties, what frustration of the high end of his being, what ruin to others, what self-ruin—himself knowing all, and yet doing all—living, acting amid the wreck and wretchedness of his own work, and knowing all only to be wretched in all he knows!

I remark—

In the third place, that another element of fitness in each of the two kinds of action specified, to secure its result to the

agent, is that it is *his own action*. The same action duly contemplated by one who is not its author, would afford him as the action were good or bad, a high degree of pleasure or a high degree of pain. But how would this pleasure or pain be augmented were the action *his own*! The action has now a new element. It is *his* action. The mere fact, that that which gives us pleasure or pain is *ours*, and more especially that it is *ours* by *production* or *authorship*, is a source of a high, distinct and peculiar pleasure or pain. We value happiness, or we value natural beauty or excellence the more because it is *our own*; and we abhor misery, or we abhor natural deformity or worthlessness the more because it is *our own*. In respect to an *action* or work which is *our own*, which has high worth or excellence, the fact is more striking and obvious. Who that has read with pleasure and learned to appreciate Milton's "Paradise Lost," would not be aware of a new and peculiar pleasure, were that immortal poem the product of his own genius? In view then of an action characterized by such unparalleled worth and excellence as perfect benevolence on the part of a moral being, an action perfectly fitted to prevent the highest misery, and to produce the highest happiness of all other beings, perfectly fitted to please and bless God and his sentient creation—to say, "I have done it," must be a source of happiness, which in this respect, can have no parallel, as the effect of any or all other action conceivable. For a being capable of this happiness, to lose it, how great the loss; to secure it and perpetuate it in the perfect exercise of his exalted powers forever, what a possession for immortality!

On the contrary, the opposite action of a moral being, for the same reason, is in a high degree painful. It is *his own action*. No one can duly contemplate such action in its fearful and fell malignity, even as the act of another being, without a painful, revolting abhorrence. How then, must the painfulness of this emotion be augmented when the action is his own. The action has now another element. It is *his* action, and the emotion is not mere abhorrence, but it is *self-abhorrence*, with that oppressive painfulness which admits of no alleviation. Were it but the act of another, that would afford sensible relief. But the whole weight and burden of authorship fall on him. The destruction of the highest happiness, and the production of the highest misery forevermore, is the

measure of the evil, of the turpitude of *his own act*. It is his act, which can never be undone; or rather, in view of its remediless result, it is his act being done forever, and therefore, with the ruin ever before him, he sees himself the continued perpetrator of this deed of death. In view of such an act—such a work, to be obliged to say, “I have done it”—this is one element of that unqualified self-abhorrence which completes the misery of a moral being, on account of wrong moral action. What an inheritance were this, when apart—alone, in the reflective solitude of eternity!

I remark—

In the fourth place, that another element in each kind of moral action, is that it is done with *moral liberty*. An intelligent agent, we may suppose, would reflect on a *necessary* action having the same relations to the happiness and misery of other beings as a free action, with emotions of pleasure in the one case, and of pain in the other. But how would the pleasure in the one case, and the pain in the other be heightened in view of the action, as done with power to do the opposite in its stead—done, when otherwise the opposite must be done—done, when do which he may, he does more, he avoids doing and so prevents the opposite action. What a determination then, is that of free-will in moral action! We all know how moral liberty burdens the soul with moral responsibility. If it discharge that responsibility, what joy and triumph it finds in so doing! If it violates it, how the violation remains to oppress and crush the spirit! What power of life and death to the soul, in moral liberty! Wherefore is this? It is that moral liberty, compared with what would be without it, in one case doubles the happiness, and in the other doubles the misery, of which the agent is capable from action as it is related to its objects.

Consider this in respect to benevolence or benevolent action. Either of two positive actions—the one with its tendency to the highest conceivable good, or the other with its tendency to the highest conceivable evil of other beings, is possible to the agent. The action in respect to the objects of action, is elective; and determines one of these great issues of action, and so prevents the other. The agent is under the absolute necessity of doing one positive action or the other positive action; and when he can do either instead of the other, does

that which in its true tendency blesses all, and in so doing prevents the doing of that which in its true tendency curses all. His therefore, must be the twofold joy of this twofold achievement. And is there then no peculiar joy in avoiding and so preventing the evil in such a case? Who does not know the joy of escaping death, when life and death are placed in an even balance? And is there no peculiar joy, when right and wrong moral action with their respective tendencies and results are thus poised on moral liberty, in doing the right when otherwise the wrong would and must be done? What a deliverance from evil is thus effected, in the accomplishment of good! What a sublime power in a moral being is the will acting right, when otherwise it must act wrong! Look through heaven and earth, what other power *is* sublime—what other is there to admire—in what other to rejoice! Power necessitated to act with a sure result for the highest happiness or for the highest misery of all, and free to act for either instead of the other, and acting right! How is the conscious joy of acting right heightened by the conscious and equal joy of not acting wrong—becoming the twofold joy, that of action perfectly fitted to bless, and that of avoiding action perfectly fitted to curse a sentient universe! It is the moral liberty of action, giving to the self-complacency of virtue, a signal, unsurpassed element of joy—even the twofold blessedness *within*, of electively preventing a hell and creating a heaven *without*. What other action conceivable can afford such happiness to a moral being?

Let us now briefly contemplate *selfishness* or selfish action as done in the exercise of *moral liberty*. Here the same element so benign in benevolent action, becomes only a fearful and deadly evil. In this kind of action there is also a twofold performance, involving a twofold issue. How great the evil, in evil done and in good prevented. The agent by his one act, spreads the broad field of sentient existence with desolation, misery and woe, not where otherwise there had been nothing, but where otherwise, by his own opposite act he had diffused life, joy and perfect blessedness to all. By his one act he has both destroyed the good and produced the evil. His therefore must be the twofold misery of this twofold deed of death. And is there no additional peculiar misery in an act, which while it produces so much evil also destroys so much good,

when the agent might as well have prevented the evil and produced the good? To stand at this fountain of life or of death to all, and by one act to open the stream that shall flow forth in desolation and woe unmingled, remediless, eternal, when I might instead by another act, cause the rivers of pleasure and of the fullness of joy to flow forevermore—to do that which is thus fitted to curse, instead of that which is thus fitted to bless all sentient being—it is this, which gives to *remorse* one of its peculiar elements of unequalled agony. What a fearful power is *free-will*, acting morally wrong! Who shall measure the conscious agony of acting morally wrong, enhanced by the equal agony of not acting morally right in its place! Here is no necessity to alleviate what could not be avoided—but conscious freedom—conscious moral liberty, with the twofold agony of the twofold work of destroying the highest happiness, and of producing the highest misery of all other beings—the twofold agony *within*, of preventing a heaven and of producing a hell *without*! What other action can give such misery to a moral being?

I remark—

In the fifth place; that another element in each kind of moral action, is that it is *predominant* action. Under this relation, it is what is commonly called *the governing principle* of the mind, inasmuch as in its true nature and tendency, it reigns over the whole man, controlling and directing all other action in subservience to the accomplishment of its object or end. We have already contemplated this relation of the two kinds of moral action to the happiness and misery of others than the agent. Nor is there perhaps any other relation under which the one more impressively reveals itself as the means of happiness, and the other of misery to the agent himself. As a *predominant* principle, whether the morally right or the morally wrong principle, it sways and determines all, all thought, all feeling or emotion, all desires, all volitions, all subordinate and all executive action—the whole inner and outer man. It is the grand central power, which takes under its dominion the entire productive energy of a moral being. It thus employs powers the most exalted—powers, which in comparison degrade all others—powers unparalleled for good and for evil—either for the best, or for the worst conceivable results of power.

Contemplate then, a moral being placing benevolence on the throne, and giving it perfect dominion over himself. You see in such a being, one made to live and to act for the prevention of the highest misery, and for the production of the highest happiness of a sentient universe. Behold these canopied heavens—each world of this vast system perhaps the residence of spiritual and immortal beings like our own! Amid what amplitude and splendors of existence a moral being is destined to live and to act forever! With this destination every thing comports. You see powers and capacities fitted to this high end. You see subordinate objects, ends, motives—the laws and modes of subordinate action, and executive doings, combined to give completeness to the system. You see all worthy of the infinite attributes of their author—all stamped with and fitted for, never-ending existence. In such a being you see benevolence the reigning principle—governing, guiding, employing these high powers for these high ends—directing and consecrating all with delightful activity to the accomplishment of these results, and with the joyous anticipation of accomplishing them forever. And now to sway such a scepter—to reign over and employ such powers for such ends—thus to govern and employ intelligence, and feeling, and emotion, and will, and heart—the entire productive energy of an immortal spirit, and that spirit one's self—what other dominion, what other condition of being, is worthy of a desire or a thought? What sublime dignity, what moral excellence, beauty and glory, in the reigning principle itself! What absolute perfection it imparts to the whole nature of a being the greatest of all, save Him who made him! What, compared with this, are the splendors of earthly royalty, even of the monarch of a thousand empires? Compared with him, this were the apocalyptic angel, seen standing in the sun. Is there pleasure—is there happiness in the possession and use of power? What higher pleasure, what higher happiness than the possession and perfect use of the powers of a moral being, guided and controlled by perfect love to their perfect issues? Particularly, under the guidance and control of such a principle, how would *the intellect* awake, in all its forms of action, and in the vastness of its power! How, in the delightful activity of its unimpaired vigor, would it grapple with themes worthy of its strength! How, as destined to know and to know still more forever,

would it exult in its own expansion and enlargement! How would it remove the clouds and darkness, that intercept the knowledge of all that is great, and good and fair, and devoted to reasonings and contemplations which become the minds of angels, partake of their happiness, in seeing and knowing all in the sun-light of changeless truth! How also, would the dominion of such a principle extend to all the primary active principles of our nature! No dull inactivity would oppress the mind; no reluctant sloth more wearisome than the effort it dreads, would stupefy the powers. Its self-active nature would be ever awake in all its susceptibilities to objects without and objects within—to the happiness of others and its own in their beautiful coincidence—to moral rectitude in its loveliness, and to moral pravity in its turpitude—to the attractive fitness of all means to ends which are good, and to the revolting fitness of all means to ends which are evil. The desire of knowledge, the desire of excellence, the desire of power, the desire of the esteem and love of others, the desire of society—every desire, tendency and appetency of our nature of the class which seem least capable of perversion, would be in place, and active to fulfill its function and to find its own gratification. Under the reign of this principle, there would be emulation without ambition, exaltation without pride, self-approbation without vanity, distinction without envy, acquisition without avarice, temperance without austerity, economy without meanness, liberality without prodigality, and excitement without agitation. There would be no extremes either in deficiency or excess, and no violence by conflict. How too it would subdue, regulate, and direct all those propensities, lusts, and passions which annoy, molest and make wretched; preventing internal anarchy, bringing all into peaceful subjection, imparting order and harmony in their attractive beauty, and employing all these essential elements of our nature, even those which have been counted its grand defects and blemishes, only as the instruments of our highest well-being. Instead of the storms and tempests of ungoverned appetite and passion, to darken and disturb the serenity within, the ever-present shekinah would diffuse its perpetual luster and influence.

Consider too, its achievements in difficulties overcome and deeds performed. Its work is to resist, to overcome, to control

all obstacles and all enemies to truth, to virtue and happiness. How it corrects prejudice and willful pertinacity of opinion, with their false judgments and errors! How it welcomes truth not only in its light, but in its practical power! If error is death, what victories are these? How it overcomes the world, vanquishing every form of temptation, resisting corrupt example, repelling the seductive attractions of wealth, honor and pleasure, using the world as not abusing it, and rendering all its gifts tributary to a pilgrimage hastening to a better country. In its onward way, it is discouraged by no obstacles, stopped by no fatigue, put to flight by no terrors; but perpetuating its own strength for higher achievements by its use, it becomes stronger and stronger for its everlasting triumphs. What deeds of magnanimity it has performed, in dungeons, on scaffolds, on the rack, in the fire, to which worldly heroism furnishes no parallel—deeds that need not the acclamations of admiring men, for they are crowned with God's approbation. How too, in all the varied forms of beneficence, it sends forth the almoners of its bounty—the ministering spirits of its love! By its practical sympathies, by its supplies of want, by the prevention of evil, by the removal of suffering and the relief of sorrow, by the instruction of ignorance, the reformation of vice and the restoration to virtue, how, like our great Exemplar, it feeds the hungry, heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, binds up the broken-hearted, and raises the dead to life! It is the spirit of well-doing on angel-wings, waiting the orders of the throne, or flying on errands of mercy in their execution. How it adorns the mind with all the minor virtues of the inner man! How it meets crosses with cheerfulness, suffering with patience, trials with submission, injuries with forgiveness, wrath with meekness, persecution with prayer, rendering good for evil, and blessing for cursing, and bringing all, by these conquests, into sweet and peaceful subjection, how gracefully it sways the scepter! No jarring elements or violent changes without interrupt "the soul's calm sunshine and heartfelt joy." In this sanctuary dwell truth and uprightness, integrity and justice, love and gratitude, kindness, good-will and mercy. Piety also is here, with its adoring reverence, and love and gratitude, with its steadfast hope in immutable goodness, its confidence reposing in everlasting strength, and its fullness of joy flowing from the fountains of eternity. This is benevolence reigning

in the heart. How, under its perfect dominion, would the soul be blessed! On earth, would those sister seraphs, holiness and happiness, again dwell in every heart, and paradise be regained! Like the Supreme on the throne above, summoning the angel hosts to His service, it calls forth the full and bright assemblage of all the minor virtues and graces to do its will, in blessing and in being blessed. This is the moral excellence of a moral being with its happiness—that moral excellence, whose worth, beauty, loveliness can be seen only in heaven's light, whose raptures can be expressed only in heaven's song. It is heaven itself.

Let us now contemplate the selfish principle enthroned in the heart of a moral being. We see every thing reversed. Under this dominion, we see the same exalted powers—powers unparalleled for good and for evil, employed for the worst conceivable results of power. The high powers of intellect, of emotion, of will and heart, which qualify for action amid the scenes and grandeurs of eternity, powers and capacities which reveal the image, are stamped with the immortality, and bespeak the highest design of a creating Deity; these powers, with the productive energies and unchanging laws of executive action, are devoted to the destruction of the highest happiness, and to the production of the highest misery of a sentient universe; these powers in their uncounteracted nature and tendency—for so truth contemplates them—make sure their results. And now, what is it to the agent himself, thus to employ such powers for such ends? What is it, to establish such a dominion over himself? What a perversion of faculties, what a defeat of high destiny, what low and still lower depths of degradation, what an outrage on nature, what utter self-destruction! More particularly, how under the influence of the selfish principle the exalted power of intellect is employed! This faculty of a moral being is made to preside over and direct all his other powers. It gives to such a being the knowledge of the greatest of all truths—that *to be happy, he must be good*; and yet in forming and acting under the selfish principle, it governs him by the greatest of all lies—that *to be happy, he must be selfish*. “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” He who thinks right, will feel and act right; he who thinks wrong, will feel wrong and act wrong. Every impure affection, every corrupt principle, every criminal de-

sign, every wrong and vicious action, has its antecedent in thought. Thoughts grow into desires, desires ripen into resolves, and resolves terminate in execution. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts." What next? "Murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." All begins in thought. Thoughts are the precursors of all the storms and tempests of the soul—the floodgates of all which desolates, afflicts, corrupts and ruins the immortal mind. Thus intellect, that high faculty, which so exalts a moral being above every other, by giving him all truth necessary to the highest perfection of being, gives him for his practical guidance and control only falsehood and lies. With such things to be known, and with such intelligence to know them—such treasures of wisdom and of knowledge, with such power to know them by intuition, by consciousness, by reflection, by memory, by reason and judgment, with such intelligence dwelling amid the light of truth, of life, of blessedness, and yet every right and true conviction is held in abeyance, and every practical operation of thought, of contemplation, of reasoning, gives error, falsehood and death! At the same time, this intelligence by a necessity of its own nature, must see and know its own fearful perversions and the fearful issues! Who shall measure the unhappiness, the miseries of such perversions of such a power—of the violence and outrage done to this godlike faculty? Consider now the influence of the selfish over all those primary principles of the soul, which directly lead to all subordinate emotions, desires and affections. And here its first effect is to resist, counteract, and paralyze that highest susceptibility of the mind—susceptibility to happiness from the well-being of others. This part of our nature, which is the basis of all feeling in respect to right and wrong doing, of all the affections, desires, and emotions that respect the true well-being of others and our own, is held in abeyance, or rather benumbed into inaction and torpidity.

### LECTURE III.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.—The nature of such a law further unfolded.—Third characteristic of the law so demanded in a perfect Moral Government, viz.: it requires benevolence and forbids selfishness.—Relation of predominant to subordinate action.—Benevolence and selfishness defined.—These constitute the only kind of action possible to a moral being.—Manner in which the law requires and forbids subordinate action.—Benevolence and selfishness the only morally right and wrong actions.

*THIRDLY. The law of a perfect moral government requires benevolence as the sum of obedience, and forbids selfishness as the sum of disobedience on the part of its subjects.*

By this I mean that the law of a perfect moral government absolutely and universally requires benevolence and benevolence only, and that it absolutely and universally forbids selfishness and selfishness only, while by this universal requirement, it virtually or in effect requires subordinate action only as such action becomes in the variable circumstances of its subjects, the appropriate expression of benevolence; and by this universal prohibition, it virtually or in effect forbids subordinate action only as it becomes in the variable circumstances of its subjects, the appropriate expression of selfishness.

Before I proceed to offer the proof of this proposition, I deem it important to distinguish the different kinds of action on the part of moral beings, which the law of a perfect moral government may be supposed to respect.

Premising that by a moral being I mean not one who acts or has acted morally, but one who, from his nature and condition, is qualified to act morally, and is under a necessity of so acting, I proceed to say, that—

All the action which is predicable of such a being when he acts, and which now demands consideration, may be included in two kinds, viz., that in which he electively prefers some object or end as his supreme or chief object, and that action which is dictated or prompted by this preference.\* Every moral being as such comes under the necessity, from his nature

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\* That kind of action which takes place through the suspension of the governing principle, and which is not prompted by it, and which is occasional and unusual, in the present connection claims no particular consideration.

and condition, of acting with his will and heart in respect to some object or end, as his supreme or chief object or end; that is, of electively preferring some object or end to every other in competition with it, as an object of preference; or of supremely loving some such object or end. This act or state of the mind, as contemplated under somewhat different aspects and relations, we commonly call the supreme affection, the prevailing disposition, the governing principle, the controlling purpose of the mind. The true nature and tendency of this state or act of the mind is to dictate or prompt, to control or govern all other action of the being. This state of mind, considered *as action cognizable by law*, is too often lost sight of by moralists, as if moral obligation had no respect to the acts of the will and heart—the most important of all action, because the word *action* is most frequently applied to executive doings. To avoid this error, I propose to distinguish the two kinds of action by one peculiar and prominent characteristic, and shall call the one *predominant action*, and the other *subordinate action*.

Each of these kinds of action may be subdivided into two other kinds.

*Predominant action* consists either in *benevolence* or in *selfishness*. These are the only predominant acts of which a moral being is capable, and one or the other is predicable of every being of whom moral character, viz., morally right or morally wrong action, is predicable.\* Benevolence consists in the elective preference of, or in electively preferring, the highest well-being of all sentient beings, for its own sake, to every object in competition with it, as an object of choice or preference. Selfishness consists in the elective preference of, or in electively preferring, some inferior good to the highest well-being of all sentient beings, and is, of course, a preference of this inferior good to the prevention of the highest misery of all; that is, a preference of the highest misery of all to the absence of the inferior good, as these objects come into competition as objects of choice or preference.

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\* In confirmation of some fundamental principles like the present, I shall refer to certain passages in the sacred writings, simply as expressing the obvious decisions of reason and common sense in such forms of statement, as to commend their truth at once to the mind of every one, irrespectively of their divine authority. In the present instance, I refer to MATT. vi. 24; xii. 30.

It is important to our purpose to specify some of the characteristics which are common to the two kinds of predominant action, and those wherein they differ.

Each then, is an act of *the will and heart*, or an elective preference, by which I mean that it includes two elements, viz., choice and affection.\* Each is an *intelligent* act, or an act done with the present knowledge or intellectual apprehension of the nature of action, as related to the great and true end of action on the part of a moral being. Each is a *free act*, or an act done with entire exemption from the influence of every *cause* of the act, which, in the circumstances in which it takes place, renders the act necessary. Each is a *permanent* act, or an act which tends to its own perpetuity, and is for the most part *perpetual*. Each is *predominant* action, or action which tends to secure all other action, as it becomes the necessary means of accomplishing the end of the predominant action. Such are the elements in which the two elective preferences called *benevolence* and *selfishness* agree.

Wherein do these kinds of action differ? Thus. *Benevolence is action whose direct end is the great end of all action on the part of a moral being, and which is perfectly fitted, in all the circumstances of such a being, to produce this end, viz., the highest well-being of all other sentient beings and of the agent himself. Selfishness is action, whose direct end is some end inferior to the great end of action on the part of a moral being, and which is perfectly fitted, in all the circumstances of such a being, to defeat this end, and to produce the opposite end, the highest misery of all other sentient beings and of the agent himself.*

There is one end of action on the part of moral beings which, as determined by their nature and their relations, may be said to be *the great end of all action* on their part, or, as it is sometimes called, "the chief end" of such beings, viz., the highest possible well-being of each and of all. This is an end, to the

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\* The morally right act or state of the mind is often spoken of as an act of the will—an elective act, an act of choosing. *Vide* DEUT. xxiv. 16–24; PROV. i. 29; ISA. vii. 15; LUKE x. 42. The more prominent element however, in this state of mind is affection; and hence it is most frequently designated in some manner which presents it as a state of affection. In these cases however, the language is so used as to show that it is a *supreme* affection; or that it is love not as a mere constitutional emotion, but as involving an act of the will; (*i. e.*) that it is an elective preference. *MATT. x. 37; xxii. 37; 1 JOHN ii. 15, 16; ACTS xi. 23.*

promotion of which, or to the prevention of which in the promotion of the opposite end, the highest misery of all, all action on the part of moral beings has, in a greater or less degree, a relation of tendency or fitness. It is, therefore, emphatically *the great end* or *the chief end* of all action on their part—not, indeed, as the end at which they actually aim, but as that end at which they are qualified to aim and to promote, and at which they must supremely aim if they would promote or secure the great end of their being. There is one, and only one kind of action on the part of a moral being, whose *direct end* is the great end of all action on his part, viz., benevolence, or the elective preference of this end to every other in competition with it, as an object of election or choice. In this sense benevolence, as action whose direct object or end is the great end of all action on the part of a moral being, may be said to be the action, and the only action, which is *perfectly fitted* to promote or accomplish this end. There is one, and only one kind of action on the part of a moral being, whose *direct end* is some end inferior to this great end, instead of this great end, viz., selfishness, or an elective preference of the inferior end to this great end, in which the agent virtually and actually proposes to destroy all other good, and to produce the highest misery of all for the sake of this direct and inferior end. In this sense selfishness may be said to be *perfectly fitted*, and to be the only action which is perfectly fitted to prevent the highest well-being of all and to produce the highest misery of all.

Thus every moral being who possesses a moral character, or who acts morally right or morally wrong, electively prefers some object or end as his supreme object or end. In this state of his will and affections, and when under its controlling influence, he ever aims to promote or accomplish that object or end. It maintains an habitual ascendancy in the mind, dictating and controlling his particular acts, as these include particular thoughts, affections, desires, dispositions, volitions, and overt doings, in subservience to the accomplishment of that object or end. Without this predominant act or state of the mind there could be no consistency in his conduct as a moral being, and no uniformity of character—nothing which can be called moral character.

Again, there is, as I have said, another kind of action, viz., *subordinate action*. By *subordinate action* is meant all that

kind of action which is dictated and controlled by predominant action, by the supreme affection, governing principle or purpose of the mind, and which is done in subservience to, or to promote the end of the governing principle or purpose. This kind of action may be divided into two particular kinds of subordinate action. The one consists in particular elective preferences, voluntary affections, dispositions or purposes, in which no present or immediate action of either mind or body is directly willed. This may be called *immanent subordinate* action. The other consists in willing directly some present mental or bodily action, and in the action willed. This may be called *executive subordinate* action. Examples of the former—justice, honesty, veracity, gratitude, humanity or kindness to fellow-beings, patriotism, natural affection or love of kindred, friendship, honor, etc.; and their opposites—all these, considered as habitual dispositions, affections, purposes, principles—as mental acts or states, which involve acts of will, or are elective preferences of their particular objects in which no present acts are directly willed, are examples of *immanent subordinate* action. Examples of the latter are the act of rendering to another his due, the act of speaking truth, the act of giving alms, etc., etc., and their opposites. These, considered as including in each instance the act willed and the act of willing it, are examples of *executive subordinate* action. For the purpose of distinguishing the elements of any action of the latter class, we may call one element the *imperative volition*, and the other the *overt action*.

In this view of *subordinate action*, it is obvious that the *direct* end of such action, that is, the end *directly* aimed at by the mind in such action, is not the great end of all action on the part of a moral being, nor the opposite end, and that, in this sense, subordinate action is not fitted to promote this end nor to defeat it. On the contrary, the mind, the agent in all *subordinate* action, *directly* aims only at some limited degree of happiness or misery. In so acting, he can aim at the great end of action only *indirectly*—that is, through the predominant action. When such action is *directly* fitted to produce some limited degree of happiness, which is necessary to the highest well-being of all, then it is indirectly fitted to promote this great end; and when it is directly fitted to produce some limited degree of happiness which is inconsistent with this

great end, or some limited degree of misery which is inconsistent with it, then it is *indirectly* fitted to defeat this great end, and to promote its opposite.

Having thus distinguished the different kinds of action on the part of moral beings, I now proceed to show that the law of a perfect moral government requires benevolence as the sum of obedience, and forbids selfishness as the sum of disobedience; in other words, that it absolutely requires benevolence and benevolence only, and forbids selfishness and selfishness only, in all circumstances; while by this requirement and prohibition it virtually or in effect requires and forbids other action, only as such action becomes in the variable circumstances of its subjects, the appropriate expression of benevolence and selfishness. This will appear from the following considerations:

First. *Predominant action, either in the form of benevolence or selfishness is not only unavoidable, but it is the only action on the part of moral beings which, in all the circumstances essential to their condition, is possible.* The circumstances of moral beings are of two kinds; those which are essential to their condition as moral beings, which are invariable, and which are common to all their actual circumstances; and those which are not essential to their condition as moral beings, which are variable, and therefore not common to all their actual circumstances. Now every moral being as such exists in such circumstances and sustains such relations, that he is under an absolute necessity from his nature and his circumstances to perform predominant action, either in the form of benevolence or of selfishness. He must choose either the highest well-being of the sentient universe, or some inferior object as his supreme object. The former is to him an object of possible choice. On the choice of it depends his highest well-being. He is therefore under the necessity either of choosing it, or not choosing it as his supreme good. If he chooses this object as his supreme object, he is a benevolent being. If he does not, then he chooses some inferior object, rather than this; and is a selfish being. He is therefore under an absolute necessity of performing predominant action, of becoming in heart—in principle—in the governing purpose of the mind, either a benevolent or a selfish being, which necessity is as fixed and unavoidable as are his nature and his circumstances. Nor in

those circumstances which are essential to his condition as a moral being, is any other action possible than predominant action, either in the form of benevolence or of selfishness. All other action is in the nature of things, dictated or prompted by predominant action—is the consequent and effect of predominant action—and therefore utterly impossible without prior predominant action. All other action is *subordinate action*; and all subordinate action is, in different respects, *circumstantial* or conditional action. The possibility of such action depends on variable circumstances, which are not essential to the condition of a moral being, nor common to all his actual circumstances. No moral being can in disposition, principle, affection, volition, purpose, become either just or unjust, true or false, honest or dishonest, or perform any other *immanent subordinate act or action*, until he has become either benevolent or selfish; and therefore not until predominant action in the form of benevolence or selfishness has taken place. The same thing is true in respect to all *executive subordinate action*; for this also depends on prior predominant action. All subordinate action therefore, since it depends on prior predominant action, is in this respect circumstantial, as it depends on variable circumstances, which are not essential to the condition of a moral being. Nor is this all. A moral being, in one set of variable circumstances, may be under the necessity of performing either one kind of subordinate action or its opposite; for example, of being either just or unjust in disposition or purpose, or in another case, of acting executively either justly or unjustly. In another set of variable circumstances, he may be under the necessity of performing either another kind of subordinate action or its opposite; for example, of being in purpose or will either true or false; or in another case, of speaking truth or falsehood. Thus, when subordinate action becomes possible by the existence of prior predominant action, whether such possible subordinate action be of one kind or of another kind, depends on those variable circumstances which are not essential to the condition of a moral being. And further, there is no kind of subordinate action, which in any circumstances is fitted to subserve the end of benevolence, which in some other circumstances may not be fitted to subserve the end of selfishness, and be prompted by this principle. Thus a man may love his kin-

dred, or his country, he may purpose to be just, honest, faithful and true; to give all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, either from the benevolent or the selfish principle. At the same time there are few if any kinds of subordinate action, which in all circumstances are fitted only to promote the end of selfishness, or which in some possible circumstances may not be fitted to subserve the end of benevolence, and be performed from this principle.\* Thus the general purpose to destroy, or this purpose in connection with the act of destroying the dwellings of others, in ordinary circumstances would be ascribed to the selfish principle and pronounced under this complex conception injustice; and yet the same act as *immanent subordinate* action, in the form of a purpose or as including the executive act, when contemplated as necessary on the part of firemen to prevent the burning of a city, would be demanded by benevolence, and may be prompted by this principle. So the immanent act including the executive subordinate act which respects taking the life of our fellow-beings, in one case is justly esteemed an act of selfishness, and in another case an act demanded by benevolence; and may be prompted by benevolence. It may be a question with some, in view of the example of the Saviour in LUKE xxiv. 19-28—to say nothing of defeating the design of an assassin by stratagem or of attacking an invading army by ambuscade, whether the act of *deceiving* so commonly considered as in all cases resulting from the selfish principle, and equivalent to lying, may not in some cases be dictated by the benevolent principle. Without deciding however, whether there be any kind of subordinate action, which in all the variable circumstances of moral beings, can be dictated only by the selfish principle, it is evident that all that action which I have called subordinate action, is prompted by predominant action; and that such action is absolutely impossible on the part of moral beings, without prior predominant action.

Now that the law of a perfect moral government should require and forbid action, which in the circumstances of the

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\* It should here be kept in mind, that justice, veracity, patriotism, and other specific virtues, which involve the benevolent principle, and that injustice, lying, murder, and other particular crimes or vices, which involve the selfish principle, are not what is meant by subordinate action; since in this mode of conceiving and speaking, they include both *predominant and subordinate* action.

beings to whom it is given, is utterly impossible on their part, is preposterous and incredible. It is equally preposterous and incredible, that the law of such a government should not require benevolence and forbid selfishness in all circumstances in which they are possible on the part of subjects. Since then the law of such a government, *absolutely* requires and forbids predominant action, and predominant action only in all the circumstances of its subjects which are essential to their moral condition, and therefore in all their circumstances, and since benevolence and selfishness are the only kinds of predominant action, it follows, that the law of a perfect moral government *absolutely and universally* requires benevolence, and benevolence only, and forbids selfishness and selfishness only, on the part of its subjects.

This view of the subject will be further confirmed, by considering *the manner* in which the law of a perfect moral government *requires and forbids subordinate action*. This law, as we have said, by its requirement and its prohibition of predominant action, *virtually or in effect* requires and forbids subordinate action only as such action becomes in the variable circumstances of its subjects, the appropriate expression of benevolence and of selfishness.

As we have seen, predominant action on the part of the subjects of law, is possible in all their circumstances as moral beings, while in some of their circumstances subordinate action is impossible. Now it is the nature and tendency of predominant action to go forth into the appropriate expressions of itself in subordinate action, according to the variable circumstances of the subject, in which the possibility and necessity of such action arise. Hence, to require predominant action in the form of benevolence *absolutely and universally*, is *virtually and in effect*, to require all its appropriate expressions in subordinate action, as the possibility and necessity of such action arise in all the variable circumstances of the subject; and to forbid predominant action in the form of selfishness *absolutely and universally*, is *virtually and in effect*, to forbid all its appropriate expressions in subordinate action, as the possibility and necessity of such action arise, in all the variable circumstances of the subject.\* Nor is there any other mode in

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\* In these remarks, the knowledge or possible knowledge of subordinate action as the appropriate expression of predominant action, on the part of the subjects of

which the law of a perfect moral government can require and forbid subordinate action. To suppose that it should, is to suppose that it should go beyond the obligation of the subject in its requirement and prohibition; subordinate action being utterly impossible in some circumstances of the subject. The law therefore, does all it can do by absolute and universal requirement, to secure all the subordinate action, which in all the variable and all the possible circumstances of the subject, can become the appropriate expression of benevolence; and all it can do by absolute and universal prohibition, to prevent all the subordinate action which in all the variable and possible circumstances of the subject, can become the appropriate expression of selfishness. In its absolute and universal requirement of benevolence, it requires a permanent predominant principle of action in all the circumstances of the subject, which gives the best security which the nature of things admits of, that all subordinate action which is the appropriate expression of this principle in all the variable circumstances of the subject, will be performed; and in its absolute and universal prohibition of selfishness, it forbids a principle of action in all the circumstances of the subject, which gives the best security which the nature of things admits of, that all subordinate action which is the appropriate expression of this principle in all the variable circumstances of the subject, will be prevented.

Should it here be said that, according to this view of the law under consideration, it cannot absolutely and universally require and forbid any subordinate action whatever—not even thus require justice or veracity, nor thus forbid injustice or falsehood—I answer, that the law cannot require and forbid action which, in the circumstances of the subject, is, from the nature of the case, utterly impossible. It cannot require justice and forbid injustice, when it is thus impossible that the subject should be either just or unjust; and the subject can be neither just nor unjust, in any import of the language, until he has become either benevolent or selfish. He must act in one or in the other of these forms of predominant action before he can perform any subordinate act whatever. When therefore, we speak without qualification, as we often do, and yet with suffi-

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law, is assumed as implied in those circumstances, in which such action becomes possible on their part.

cient precision for all ordinary purposes of the law, as requiring and forbidding certain kinds of subordinate action, all that can be meant is, that by requiring and forbidding it in its principle, it requires and forbids it virtually or in effect in all the variable circumstances of the subject in which such action becomes possible. In this mode the law requires and forbids subordinate action, in the only conceivable mode of requiring and forbidding it, by a perfect and universal law. Indeed, were this mode of requiring and forbidding subordinate action not adopted, subordinate action must be left, to an interminable extent, wholly without requirement and prohibition in any respect whatever; the supposition of particular precepts to regulate all subordinate action being preposterous in the extreme.

It is readily admitted, that the law of a perfect moral government, like the decalogue, may, for good reasons and to a limited extent, specify in the form of particular requirements and prohibitions, subordinate action to be done and not done. But it is maintained that all such precepts, *so far as they respect merely subordinate action*, are only formal specifications or statements of such action, which as the appropriate expression of benevolence and selfishness in the variable circumstances in which it becomes possible, becomes in some sense binding on the subject; and not moral precepts or laws which imply the moral quality of such action; that all such precepts, though useful and important in many respects, especially as they relate to action which is possible in nearly all the variable circumstances of the subject, are yet to be interpreted in regard to the universality of their application, as all such language is, by the known limits of possibility and impossibility, and by the known object and design of the precepts themselves. The universal form of the language of particular precepts is one thing; the universal application of such precepts, even in all the variable circumstances of the subject, is another. This distinction is recognized in respect to every particular precept, so far as such relate to merely subordinate action, in both parental and civil governments. This shows that such precepts are not of the nature of absolute and universal law, but are rather highly useful directions, which, however extensive their application within the variable circumstances of the subject, and however unqualified the language in which they

are expressed, depend on the variable circumstances of the subject for their binding force, and which, therefore, admit of possible, though rare exceptions, so far as changes in these circumstances may require exceptions, in view of the great end of all action on the part of moral beings.\* *Vide PALEY, MOR. AND POL. PHIL., P. VI., c. 4.*

It is evident then, that the law of a perfect moral government absolutely and universally requires and forbids predominant action, and only requires and forbids other action, virtually or in effect, as it becomes in the variable circumstances of the subject, the appropriate expression of predominant action. It is equally evident, that benevolence and selfishness are the only kinds of predominant action on the part of moral beings. It follows therefore, that the law of a perfect moral government requires benevolence as the sum of all obedience, and forbids selfishness as the sum of all disobedience on the part of its subjects.

It seems greatly to perplex some moralists to distinguish the mode in which, or the ground on which, the law of a perfect moral government requires and forbids predominant action as the principle of subordinate action, from the mode in which, or the ground on which, it requires and forbids subordinate action itself. It seems to them that a law which, in the manner explained, requires and forbids subordinate action in the variable circumstances of the subject, only virtually or in effect, by the absolute and universal requirement and prohibition of predominant action, furnishes as a rule of action no adequate security for the existence of one kind, and for the prevention of another kind of subordinate action, and so jeopardizes the interests of practical morality. To show how entirely groundless such views are, it is sufficient to say, that it is impossible, in the nature of things, that the law in its absolute and universal requirement and prohibition, should extend beyond the two kinds of predominant action, since in such a case, it would extend beyond the limits of obligation

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\* This view of the precepts which respect subordinate action, though they are given in absolute forms of language, derives decisive confirmation from the common-sense interpretation of such precepts in *MATT. xii. 1-13*, particularly from the universal application of the principle in verses 7th and 12th: that the greatest good is to be done, in all cases, notwithstanding the unqualified language of particular precepts.

on the part of the subject. Besides, if the requirement of the one and the prohibition of the other of the two great predominant principles of action, will not secure the sufficiently known and obvious expressions of the one, and prevent the sufficiently known and obvious expressions of the other of these principles in appropriate subordination, how would such subordinate action be secured in one case and prevented in the other, by formally expressed particular precepts? The subject who should obey the essential requirement and prohibition of the law, would also, while the principle remains active and controlling in the mind, obey all its sufficiently known and obvious virtual requirements and prohibitions in subordinate action, as they become applicable in all his variable circumstances;\* while if he should not obey the former, there would not only be no security that he would obey the latter, but an absolute certainty that he would disobey them in every instance in which such disobedience should be necessary to accomplish the end of his governing principle, though they were formally expressed in particular enactments. Such enactments could be only formal expressions of the *virtual* requirements and prohibitions of the fundamental law, and could be of no advantage to the cause of practical morality in those cases, in which these virtual requirements and prohibitions were sufficiently known without them.

If these things are so in the cases supposed, *i. e.*, in all cases in which the *virtual* requirements and prohibitions of the fundamental law are sufficiently known or sufficiently obvious for all practical purposes, it may be naturally asked, why are particular precepts in the form of requirement and prohibition confessedly necessary in all forms of moral government, even in that which is undeniably perfect? I answer, that these precepts are necessary in all cases in which they are so, for certain purposes peculiar to subordinate action in the variable circumstances in which such action becomes possible. In some cases they are necessary to remove unavoidable ignorance in respect to the subordinate action, which were it not for such ignorance, would be *virtually* required or forbidden by the fundamental law. In some cases they are necessary to render more manifest the fitness of the subordinate action thus vir-

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\* Not to do this is justly pronounced, to be guilty of the whole law. JAMES ii. 10, and also ii. 14-25.

tually required and forbidden, and thus to remove doubt and uncertainty, and to prevent perverted and false judgments in respect to it, and so to give greater security to the performance of one kind of such action, and to abstinence from the other, than would otherwise exist. In some cases, if not in all, they give definiteness to the kind of subordinate action which they respect, as such action is the *proof* of obedience and disobedience to the fundamental law. But, more than all, such precepts are binding to an extent *so nearly universal* in all the variable circumstances of men, and with exceptions so rare, that exceptions need not be made, or if made, *prove the rule*, and therefore can never be violated without great caution, and in cases of obvious and undeniable utility. But the necessity of these particular precepts for these or other similar purposes shows that they respect only that kind of action which is virtually required or forbidden in the variable circumstances of the subjects of law, and not the action which constitutes the sum of obedience and the sum of disobedience to the law of a perfect moral government.

It may be further said that particular precepts are often, not to say commonly, promulgated in that absolute and universal form of language which imply their strictly universal application and obligation. In reply to this, it were sufficient to allege the utter and obvious impossibility of such an application of this class of precepts, since all action to which they can be applied is impossible, until the subject of law has become either benevolent or selfish. If, by the universal application of these precepts, be meant an application as extensive as the possibility of subordinate action, this may be admitted in respect to some kinds of such action, particularly some immanent subordinate action; for example, justice and injustice as mere dispositions of the mind. Still, it must be remembered, that such subordinate action may be prompted either by benevolence or selfishness; and that, therefore, considered in itself as merely subordinate action, it can be no part of that which essentially constitutes obedience or disobedience to the law of a perfect moral government. Thus considered, such action can be required and forbidden by the law, only virtually or in effect, as circumstantial action—action which becomes the appropriate expression of benevolence and of selfishness in the variable circumstances of the subject. As such action and such action

only, can particular precepts be applicable to it in any case whatever. As to those particular precepts which are designed to regulate much other subordinate action, they are still more remote from having a universal application; particularly those which respect executive subordinate action. The principle on which universal forms of language are used in common life is not that of the most strictly universal application, but that of an application so nearly universal, that the exceptions are so rare and so obvious that they require no specification, while the object of such precepts will be better answered by an unqualified use of language than by the useless attempt to specify exceptions. This principle, which might be illustrated and confirmed to any extent,\* is peculiarly applicable to particular legal enactments, which respect executive subordinate action. The common-sense application of it to the interpretation of such absolute precepts by the Saviour,† and the same familiar application of it by Christians generally to justify works of necessity and mercy on the Sabbath, are decisive on this point. A parent forbids a son, in the form of absolute prohibition, who is but partially recovered from recent illness, to go into the water; but unexpected circumstances occur, and the action thus absolutely forbidden becomes necessary to save a brother from drowning. Who, in such a case, would interpret the precept to the letter? None would deny the propriety and truth of saying that the fundamental requirement of the divine law is binding on all men; and yet the proposition is not true to the letter, since the obligation implies not merely the existence, but the moral relations of its subjects. None would deny the propriety of the absolute form in which the penalty of law is denounced against the transgressor, and yet, if the language be pressed to the utmost, the penalty can never be remitted consistently with truth.

In the use of all language, and especially in the use of the language of law, there is an object to be attained. Such language is therefore to be interpreted in reference to that object. The object of language in the form of particular precepts is to secure and to prevent subordinate action, as in the variable circumstances of the subjects of law it will in one case promote, and in the other hinder in some limited degree, the

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\* *Vide* MATT. iii. 5; Comp. HEB. ix. 27 and xi. 5.

† MATT. xii. 1-13.

general good. The subordinate action may be supposed to be that which, in all the variable circumstances of the subject in which it becomes possible, will promote the general good. The subordinate opposite action may be supposed to be that which, in all the variable circumstances of the subject in which it becomes possible, will hinder the general good. At the same time, the subordinate action which in some cases is fitted to promote the general good, will in other cases be fitted to defeat this end, or the subordinate action which in some cases is fitted to defeat, may be fitted in others to promote this end. Be these things however as they may, the application of particular precepts is in all cases to be determined in view of the nature and tendency of the executive subordinate action required and forbidden in such precepts, in the variable circumstances of the subject of law.

These things are deemed sufficient to show the truth of the *unqualified* proposition, that *he who is perfectly benevolent, perfectly obeys the law of a perfect moral government*. Nor can this be denied on the ground that one who is thus perfectly benevolent, may not fulfill all the precepts which respect subordinate action; for it is undeniable, that he will obey every such precept.

Once more. It is conceded, at least by all Christian moralists, that the sum of all duty on the part of moral beings is comprised in the great law of love or benevolence. But how this can be true, except according to the views and principles now presented, it would be impossible to show.

The same thing will appear, if we consider—secondly, *That predominant action in the form of benevolence, is the only morally right action, and in the form of selfishness, is the only morally wrong action on the part of moral beings*.

It will be admitted, that the law of a perfect moral government requires morally right action as the sum of obedience, and forbids morally wrong action as the sum of disobedience. If then it can be shown, that benevolence is the only morally right action, and that selfishness is the only morally wrong action, it will follow, that the law of a perfect moral government must require benevolence as the sum of obedience, and forbid benevolence as the sum of disobedience.

That benevolence then is the only morally right action, and that selfishness is the only morally wrong action, I argue—

1st. From the established meaning of the words *right and wrong* in common life, and from the meaning of the word *moral* as applied to action.

The errors and incongruities of moral philosophers, which so notoriously mar their discussions, and which occasion so much apparently hopeless controversy, seem to result chiefly from overlooking the true nature of the moral quality of action and the kind of action to which moral quality exclusively pertains. This oversight may be traced to several causes, primarily it is believed, to the entire want of scientific precision in the use of the words *right and wrong*, and other kindred terms. Without however, attempting to unfold these causes, or to show the magnitude of this error in scientific speculation, I propose to distinguish *right action* which is *moral*, from *right action* which is *not moral*; and *wrong action* which is *moral*, from *wrong action* which is *not moral*.

For this purpose I remark, that among the most common and important conceptions of the human mind, are those of the different and opposite relations of different things to some given end, either as fitted to accomplish or to prevent that end. To express these conceptions, the words *right and wrong* are of the most common and familiar use; and when thus used in their general import, may be thus defined: the word *right* denotes *the fitness of that to which it is applied, to produce or accomplish some given end*; and the word *wrong* denotes *the fitness of that to which it is applied, to prevent the same given end*. In the use of these words, some given end is always assumed, in respect to the accomplishment or prevention of which they are always applied. Thus assuming the familiar end to be accomplished by a pen, a clock or a watch, we apply the word *right* to its structure, to denote its fitness to accomplish that end; and the word *wrong* to denote its fitness to defeat or prevent that end. In this manner, one or the other of these words may be properly applied to any and to every thing of which either of the two specified relations of fitness to some given end, can be predicated. Even the stroke of the assassin, as by its direction it is fitted to accomplish or to defeat its end, may be properly said to be *right* or to be *wrong*. Nor can either of these words, when used antithetically or in opposition to the other, be properly used except to denote the specified relation to some assumed end.

We can no more predicate right or wrong, the one as opposed to the other of any conceivable thing, except to the specified relation to some given end, than we can predicate red or blue of ideas or other mental states. When a thing is said to be right as opposed to wrong, it is said to be so as fitted to produce some given end, and when it is said to be wrong as opposed to right, it is said to be so as fitted to prevent that end. Thus in the use of these words as opposed in import, an end is always assumed, in relation to which a thing is said to be right or wrong. In this antithetic use of the words, they can have no conceivable meaning, unless they are used to denote some relation to an end. The end assumed in respect to a particular thing, as a pen, a clock or a watch, in respect to which it is said to be right or wrong, is the end, the great or chief end, for which the class of things and of course each particular thing of the class is made.

Now, according to the universal principle of giving the same general names to things of the same general nature, the same general relations of fitness to promote or hinder the end, or the great end of any thing, are denoted by the words right or wrong. Of course, the same general ideas of fitness to produce or prevent the end, or the great end of action on the part of moral beings, are denoted by the words right and wrong, when applied to such action. To deny this, is to deny a fixed and universal principle in the use of words. It is to deny, in the language of logic, that the genus is predicable of the species; or that the same word has one and the same general meaning as applied to different things to which it can be truly applied in that meaning. It is the same as to deny, that the word *black* or *white* has the same general meaning when applied to a bird and a horse of the same color, or that the word *rectangular* or *triangular* has the same meaning when applied to different figures of the same general form. It would not be less preposterous to suppose, that the words right and wrong should be properly applied to action in the general meaning now given to each, and that they should also be thus applied to action, in another and a widely different meaning. For it is undeniable, that one kind of action, as fitted to promote the great end of all action on the part of moral beings and to prevent the opposite end, is truly and properly called *right* action. It is equally undeniable, that another kind of action, as fitted to prevent the great

end of all action on the part of moral beings, and to promote the opposite end, is truly and properly called wrong action. It is therefore as utterly incredible, that the word right or wrong should be applied to action in another meaning which excludes this meaning, or in any other generic meaning, as that the word *round* should be universally applied to a body to denote *its form*, and yet be properly applied also to denote *its color*.

Since then all action on the part of moral beings is either fitted to promote the great end of action on their part and to prevent the opposite end, or fitted to prevent this great end of action and to promote its opposite; and as the great end of all action on the part of such beings is the highest happiness of all, it follows, that the word *right* when applied in its general meaning to such action, denotes its fitness to promote the highest happiness of all, and to prevent the opposite or highest misery of all, and that the word *wrong* when thus applied, denotes the fitness of action to promote the highest misery of all and to prevent the opposite.

Again; *right action* may be subdivided into two particular kinds, viz.: *right action* which is *moral* or *morally right* action, and *right action* which is *not moral*, or *not morally right* action.

*Wrong action* may be subdivided into two particular kinds, viz.: *wrong action* which is *moral* or *morally wrong* action, and *wrong action* which is *not moral*, or *not morally wrong* action.

The word *moral* as applied to action is a common predicate of two very different kinds of action. Hence, to distinguish *moral* action from action *not moral*, we have only to determine this common import of the word *moral* as applied to two kinds of action, or to *right* and *wrong* action.

The word *moral* is from the Latin *mores*, which denotes manners or character; more exactly, that permanent, predominant act of the will and heart, which constitutes character as a predicate of a moral being. For philosophic purposes however, it is necessary to contemplate this meaning of the word *moral* more elementarily. With the explanation already given of the terms now to be used in the definition, I proceed to say—that *moral action is the intelligent, free, permanent, predominant action of the heart, in which the agent elects some given object or end as his supreme end, and which is thus directly fitted to promote this end, and to prevent its opposite.*

That all action of which the several characteristics now

specified can be truly predicated, is *moral* action, I have attempted to show in a previous lecture. I shall, therefore, only remark at present, that the feelings of self-complacency and remorse are the distinctive effects of *moral action* experienced by the agent in view of the nature of such action, and that it is impossible to conceive that any being should experience either of these feelings in view of any other action than that now specified, and that he should avoid one or the other in view of such action. The being therefore, acts *morally* who acts in the manner now specified, whether he acts or can act in any other manner, or not; while if we suppose him to act in any other manner without acting in this manner, we cannot conceive him to act *morally*. The action then now specified is moral action, and the only action which is *moral*.

From what has now been said respecting the nature of *right* and *wrong* action and of moral action, it follows, that *the intelligent, free, permanent, predominant action of the will and the heart, in which the agent electively prefers the highest well-being of all as his supreme object or end, and which is thus fitted to promote this end and to prevent its opposite, the highest misery of all, is morally right action, and the only morally right action, and that the intelligent, free, permanent, predominant action of the will and the heart, in which the agent electively prefers some object or end inferior to the highest well-being of all as his supreme object or end, and which is thus fitted to prevent this end and to promote its opposite, the highest misery of all, is morally wrong action, and the only morally wrong action.*

The same thing will be still further confirmed by considering the only other kind of action on the part of a moral being; viz., that which I have called *subordinate* action. This kind of action is either *right action*, which is not *morally right*, or it is *wrong action*, which is not *morally wrong*.

Though a moral being in respect to *predominant* action, may be properly said to be always acting either *morally right*, or *morally wrong*, yet in much of what is called action on the part of a moral being, there is *no moral* quality. This is true of all that action, which may be distinguished from the act of the will and the heart, or predominant action, and in which the agent aims only at some limited degree of happiness or misery, or natural good or evil compared with the highest degree, and

which in this respect, is fitted directly to produce only such a limited result. There are two kinds of such action; one is *right action*, but *not morally right*—the other is *wrong action*, but *not morally wrong*.

When such action, that is subordinate action, is directly fitted to produce some limited degree of natural good or evil, which is necessary to the highest happiness of all, and thus *indirectly* fitted to promote this great end of all action on the part of moral beings and to prevent the opposite, then it is *right action* but *not morally right*. It is *right* in the generic import of the word as already defined, when applied to action on the part of moral beings. As *indirectly fitted*, it is of course *fitted* to promote the great end of all action, and to prevent the opposite; and is therefore *right action*. But it is obvious at once, from what has been said, that it is *not morally right action*. It has no one of the essential characteristics of morally right action. It is not in the sense explained, either the intelligent, or free, or permanent, or predominant action of the will and heart. Nor is it the action in which the agent supremely and directly aims at the great end of all action, and which in this sense is perfectly fitted to promote this end, and to prevent its opposite. Beside, the same action with the same relation of fitness to the great end of all action and to prevent its opposite, would be *right* in the same sense, whether done from the morally right or from the morally wrong principle. To suppose the *right* subordinate action to be *morally right*, is to suppose that one may act morally right, when he acts morally wrong at the same time.

Again; when subordinate action is directly fitted to produce some limited degree of natural good or evil, which is inconsistent with the highest happiness of all, and thus indirectly fitted to prevent this great end of all action (and to promote the opposite), then it is *wrong action* but *not morally wrong action*. It is *wrong* in the generic import of the word; for being *indirectly fitted*, it is of course *fitted* to prevent the great end of all action, and to promote its opposite. It is therefore *wrong action*. But it is plainly *not morally wrong*, inasmuch as it is obvious that it has no one of the essential characteristics of morally wrong action.

In addition to these things, it is to be remarked that the quality of all subordinate action changes as the variable cir-

cumstances of moral beings change; so that an action of this kind which is right in one set of circumstances is wrong in another set of circumstances; and an action of this kind, which is *wrong* in one set of circumstances, is *right* in another. But *morally right* action is morally right in all the circumstances of a moral being; and *morally wrong* action is morally wrong in all the circumstances of a moral being. But action, the quality of which as *right* and *wrong* changes as circumstances change, cannot be morally right nor morally wrong action. Subordinate action, therefore, though it may be *right* or *wrong*, cannot be either *morally right* or *morally wrong*. It thus appears that no action except predominant action, is or can be either *morally right* or *morally wrong*. But there is no predominant action, except either benevolence or selfishness. No action then is morally right except benevolence, and no action is morally wrong except selfishness; in other words, benevolence is the only *morally right* action, and selfishness is the only *morally wrong* action. Since therefore, it is admitted that the law of a perfect moral government requires *morally right* action as the sum of obedience, and forbids *morally wrong* action as the sum of disobedience, it follows, that the law of such a government must require benevolence as the sum of obedience, and forbid selfishness as the sum of disobedience.

## LECTURE IV.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.—The nature of law further unfolded.—4. It must express the Lawgiver's preference of the action required, to its opposite, all things considered.—5. It implies, that the Lawgiver can be satisfied with obedience, and with nothing but obedience, on the part of the subject.—6. It expresses his highest approbation of obedience and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

THESE three propositions may at first sight appear to be so nearly equivalent, as to supersede any necessity for distinct consideration. The difference between them however, and the importance of distinguishing them, for the purpose of exposing opposite errors, will be obvious from the discussion.

4. The law of a perfect moral government must express the lawgiver's preference of the action required to its opposite, all things considered.

Some have maintained it to be consistent with the nature of such a law, that it express the lawgiver's preference of obedience to disobedience *in themselves considered*, while at the same time he actually prefers disobedience to obedience, in many cases at least, all things considered. In opposition to this view, it is now maintained, that the law of a perfect moral government expresses the lawgiver's preference of obedience to disobedience *all things considered*, that is; when all things which depend on the former are compared with all things which depend or can be made to depend on the latter, either as its own proper results, or by the infliction of punishment, or in any other way.

This view of the import of the word *law*, or this nature of a law may be tested by an appeal to common sense. Suppose a father to enact a law, that his children shall not lie, cheat, nor drink to excess. This being the unqualified form of the law, suppose him to add by way of explanation: "On the whole, or *all things considered*, I prefer, that you should transgress rather than obey the law—that you should lie, and cheat and drink, rather than tell the truth, and be honest and sober"—would not common sense pronounce the so-called law a contemptible burlesque and a mockery? And yet such, without

a shade of caricature, is the law of God in the view of infidels, universalists, and all who maintain that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good. If men will thus go against common sense, they must expect common sense to go against them.

But this topic demands and will receive a more thorough consideration hereafter. Some further remarks will, however, not be out of place in this connection. A law then, which is not an unqualified expression of the lawgiver's preference of the action required to its opposite, *all things considered*, is not a law. It expresses no will, no choice, no preference, and therefore can in no respect be a command, either as a requirement or a prohibition. The will cannot prefer one thing to another *in themselves considered*, and at the same time prefer the latter to the former, all things considered. The mind may *involuntarily desire* one thing more than another *in themselves considered*. But an *involuntary desire* is not an act of will; it is not an act of choice, or an elective preference. The will or mind can choose between two objects, and so prefer one to the other *only* in view of them all things considered. To suppose it to do both at the same time, is to suppose that it can choose opposites at the same time, which is as absurd as to suppose that a body should move in opposite directions at the same time. Or, view this topic in another aspect. If the two choices or preferences supposed may coexist in the same mind and should so exist—which would show itself in executive action, or which of the two wills would a benevolent being express in the form of law to his subjects? He wills or chooses, that his subjects should act morally right rather than morally wrong, considering the acts in themselves; and at the same time, he wills or chooses, that they should act morally wrong, considering all things. He cannot express with truth his will or choice that they should act morally right, for he wills or chooses that they should act morally wrong. He cannot with truth express his will or choice that they should act morally wrong, for he wills or chooses that they should act morally right. Let him express either of the supposed wills in the form of law, and he is convicted of falsehood by the existence of its opposite; which shows the supposition of these two wills to be an absurdity. The doctrine of two wills on the part of a lawgiver, as now presented,

is a simple absurdity, though extensively maintained by infidels, universalists, and by some of worthier name.\* If his law is his will, it expresses his preference of the action required to its opposite, all things considered.

5. *The law of a perfect moral government implies, that the lawgiver can be satisfied with obedience, and with nothing but obedience on the part of subjects.* The law of such a government is, as we have seen, an unqualified expression of the lawgiver's preference of the action required to its opposite, all things considered. As a lawgiver, so far as any thing on the part of subjects is concerned, he must be satisfied either with their obedience or disobedience. As willing or preferring the former rather than the latter, he must be satisfied with the former, and dissatisfied with the latter. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose him to be dissatisfied when his will is done, and satisfied when his will is not done but crossed and thwarted; which is the absurdity of supposing him dissatisfied when satisfied, or satisfied when dissatisfied.

Again; the preference of a perfect moral governor expressed in his law, is a preference of the indispensable means of the best end, to the sure means of the worst end. The former is as excellent and valuable—as much to be desired as the end of which it is the means. The latter is as odious and abominable—as much to be abhorred as the end of which it is the means. If the former—obedience, does not take place on the part of subjects, then the latter takes place on their part. And if a perfect moral governor is not satisfied with the former, then he must be satisfied, if at all, with the latter, *i. e.*, he must be satisfied with that which he regards as odious and abominable, even with the means of the worst conceivable end. The absurdity is obvious.

The same thing may be viewed in another light. The action required by his law, is either *the best* thing which can be required of subjects, or something else is *better*, or something else is *as good*. If it is the best thing, then a perfect moral governor must be satisfied with it, and with nothing else on

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\* It is not here denied, that a lawgiver may purpose or will that the act opposite to that required by his law, shall take place, rather than not adopt the system, to which, so far as his power to prevent it is concerned, the act is incidental. This does not imply that he wills the forbidden act rather than the required act, all things considered, under the system.

the part of subjects; since otherwise, he would be without benevolence, and of course without authority. If something else is *better* than obedience to law, then also, as not requiring the best thing he is destitute of benevolence, and of course, destitute of authority. If something else is *as good*, then he expresses a false or groundless preference in his law, and is of course destitute of the only character which can invest him with authority.

Again; if that which is required by the law, is not the only thing on the part of the subject which will satisfy the law-giver, then the question what will satisfy him or whether any thing will, is left wholly undetermined. On this most momentous of all questions, all is uncertainty and doubt; or rather deception and falsehood. None but a malignant being could fail to put this question at rest, in the view of his subjects. I need not say, that in such a case, neither law nor moral government could exist. Or, if we suppose that the moral governor can be satisfied with any thing but obedience on the part of subjects, then by his law he furnishes no reason to his subjects, why they should obey rather than disobey his law. Nothing appears to show that he cannot be satisfied with something on their part which is not obedience—something which he does not claim in his law; that he will not accept of a substitute for obedience—some equivalent on the part of subjects. He thus abandons all claim for obedience, and adopts the principle, that one thing or another, any thing or nothing will satisfy him. No rule of action—no law can exist in such a case.

Further; the same thing will be still more apparent, if we advert to the grounds or reasons for satisfaction with obedience on the part of the governor, and to the grounds or reasons for dissatisfaction on his part with disobedience. In respect to obedience, the grounds of satisfaction are two: first, obedience is the means of the highest well-being of the whole community, and of the obedient subject; secondly, another ground of satisfaction with the obedient subject is, that, by his obedience he perfectly honors the law and fully supports the authority of the moral governor. Nothing on the part of the subject can amount to such a perfect recognition of the rightful authority of him who reigns, as the perfect obedience of the subject. This gives to the law its highest honors, and to

the authority of the governor that homage which enthrones him in absolute dominion. Thus in the two respects specified—the entire object and end—all that a perfect moral governor can propose or desire from his subjects, is fully accomplished, and perfect benevolence is perfectly gratified by their obedience.

In respect to disobedience, the grounds of dissatisfaction are two. One is, that it tends to destroy the highest well-being, and to produce the highest misery of the community and of the disobedient subject. Disobedience to a perfect law is selfishness. This as a principle of action, or rather as itself action, tends to the destruction of the highest well-being and the production of the highest misery in others and in its subject. Such action must, of course, be the object of high dissatisfaction to a benevolent or perfect moral governor. I say nothing here concerning reconciliation with the transgressor through an atonement. I only say, that with his character as a transgressor, and the enemy of the highest well-being of all, a perfect moral governor must be, in a high degree, dissatisfied. The other ground of dissatisfaction with the transgressor is, that by his act of transgression, he has done what he can to destroy, and that which uncounteracted in its true tendency, must destroy the authority of the moral governor. Actions, in familiar phrase, speak louder than words. The act of disobedience says, in a manner the most unequivocal, the law is not to be obeyed—the authority of the moral governor is to be disregarded, and himself esteemed worthy only of unqualified contempt. The transgressor does what he can therefore, to bring into contempt, and thus to prostrate, and if nothing be done to counteract the true tendency of his act, he does what must effectually prostrate all law and all authority. Who would or could respect a king, who either from weakness, approbation, or policy, should acquiesce in the open rebellion of a single subject, trampling on his law and confronting his authority with undisguised contempt? Suppose every subject thus to defy his authority, and the triumphant shout of rebellion to go throughout his empire, what is there of law, authority, or government remaining? Nothing. And the reason is, that the act of transgression is a declaration and a proof that the lawgiver, his law, and authority, are unworthy of regard. It places the foot of rebellion on all that can

be called authority, and all that is authority in the dust, with the acquiescence of the moral governor. The proof is decisive; the conclusion is not merely authorized but required, either that he is incompetent or indisposed to uphold the best law, or both; and of course that he has no right to reign, and is entitled to no submission. The principle is the same in respect to a single instance of disobedience, considered as testimony. It gives the same testimony. It establishes the same fact—that so far as authority is concerned, there is none. For what is done once may be done again; what is done by one may be done by all. The governor's acquiescence is the result either of weakness, of timidity, of indifference, of approbation, or of a selfish policy, and a single act of transgression acquiesced in by him proves this. Such an act therefore, in the very nature of the case subverts all authority. We may indeed imagine that a moral governor should maintain his place on his throne by dint of power. We may suppose him to express due disapprobation of all other transgressors but one. But if he fails to do this in respect to one transgressor and so treats him with favor, under a merely legal system, his authority is gone—subverted. He shows the partialities of favoritism, and these subvert authority if any thing can. They show him to be wanting in principle, and therefore wholly destitute of that character which gives the right to rule; they show that he is as truly the friend of the disobedient as of the obedient—that he does not regard obedience to the best law as the indispensable means of the best end, and disobedience to it as the sure means of the worst end. Thus disobedience, without his disapprobation, subverts his authority, and he acquiesces in the result. What right has he to reign?

It may here be said, that under human governments, acts of disobedience often occur without detection, and that even subjects who are convicted as offenders are often pardoned, and yet the authority of law is not subverted. This may be admitted. But why is not the authority of law in these cases subverted? Is it because the principle now stated is not true? Or is it because every such government does what it can and shows itself determined to do what it can, consistently with its own weakness and imperfection, to counteract the tendency of transgression, by upholding its authority in the punishment of the guilty and the protection of the innocent? The latter

is the reason. In proof of it, let us suppose a civil ruler to possess knowledge and power fully adequate to detect and to punish without error and mistake, every offender against the fundamental law of the state, could he refuse to do it—could he refuse and be known to refuse to arrest the traitor and bring him to punishment, and yet sustain his authority in the view of his subjects? Could treason be thus left to walk abroad in the face of day, untouched, uncounteracted in its tendency, and the authority of the king not be subverted? What sort of justice and what sort of authority could belong to such a ruler, suffering rebellion thus to trample on law? He would be virtually employing his power to protect the traitor, and so become his accomplice in crime. In respect to *the pardoning prerogative* in human governments, whence is it? It rests solely on the ground of fallibility in the administration of justice. If we suppose the infallibility of omniscience, giving absolute security that the innocent shall not be punished instead of the guilty, the pardoning prerogative under civil law would be, or ought to be, unknown. There could be no pretense for it; for what sort of justice would that be, which should punish some or many offenders and not punish another known to be equally guilty? The act of remitting penalty in respect to a convict under a merely legal system, must either rest on the presumption of his innocence, or be an outrage on law. Thus every human government, though necessarily imperfect in the hands of an imperfect administrator, distinctly recognizes the principle of doing all it can do to sustain its authority, by counteracting the tendency of transgression to destroy it. By thus doing all it can do for this purpose, it shows that it would do more if it could, and thus avoid the very imperfections that mar its administration. It shows that, in its own estimation, the transgression of law in its true tendency is the subversion of all law and of all authority, by doing all it can do to counteract this tendency. It thus recognizes, and therefore fully establishes, that very principle of a perfect moral government which it is supposed to disprove.

If it should here be said, that in many instances human governments do not do what they can nor show that they are disposed to do what they can, to sustain their authority in the sense now maintained, and that still their authority is recog-

nized, I answer that in this view of a human government, all that can be called authority is in truth mere appearance. Language is used in these, as it is in many other cases, as if that which it denotes had an actual existence, when it has not. It is merely the language of appearance, and the thing when duly reflected upon, is seen to be a mere *quasi* authority—a thing imagined or supposed. Authority is recognized in words, and even in unreflecting thought and action; as when we speak of the rising and setting of the sun, or of the sweetness of sugar, or the coldness of ice, as properties of these things which resemble our sensations. As in these cases so in the present case, by reflection, the error is easily and surely detected and the opposite truth fully recognized. If in such cases rulers and subjects seem to recognize authority, it is at most only a recognition of something for the reality, which is not; while even this subserves the purpose of preventing the evils of revolution and of anarchy.

While the act of transgression then in its true nature and tendency subverts the authority of the moral governor, I now proceed to show that the transgressor cannot in any way, either by doing or by suffering prevent the actual effect. The whole force and influence of his act to destroy the authority of the moral governor, may be said to lie in the fact that the subject has violated the claim for his obedience. It follows therefore, that there is no way in which he can prevent the actual subversion of all authority, except by satisfying the unsatisfied claim for obedience. Can he then by any thing which he can either do or suffer, satisfy this claim? Can he annihilate the act of transgression, or change it into an act of obedience, or cause it to be true, that he has not transgressed? This is impossible. Can repentance or future obedience satisfy this claim? Repentance or future obedience can at most only satisfy the claim in future. Were it otherwise, what would the law be? It would be in language and in import, not *obey*, but *sin and repent, transgress and reform*. This would be allowing present transgression on condition of future obedience. Can works of supererogation? These are out of the question, the continued demands of law being co-extensive with the powers of the subject. Can voluntary suffering? But voluntary suffering is not the thing which the law claims of the subject. The lawgiver threatens to inflict suffering, but no be-

nevolent lawgiver ever claimed voluntary suffering as the duty of a subject. Voluntary suffering then cannot satisfy the claim. The law has but one claim on the subject, and that is, for his obedience. The lawgiver proposes nothing, aims at nothing, desires nothing, except his obedience and his happiness. How can misery be a substitute for happiness in the estimate of a benevolent lawgiver? To suppose this is to suppose him to say, "I am as willing that you should transgress and be miserable, as obey and be happy." Besides, the most that the transgressor can be supposed to accomplish either by doing or suffering, is to evince his present regard for the law. But he is bound to do or to suffer whatever can do this; it can therefore, only satisfy a present claim. Can punishment? But punishment is not the act of the transgressor, but of the lawgiver. It is not inflicted by him as a substitute for obedience. It is not an act of the lawgiver declaring himself as well satisfied that his subjects should disobey and be punished, as obey and be blessed. It is an act of the lawgiver designed, not to reform the subject and bring him to honor the law, not to retrieve all the evils of transgression and so to be an equivalent for the happiness it has destroyed, but to prevent simply one of the evils of transgression, viz., the subversion of law. It is simply the lawgiver's act, upholding his law and authority. What then on the part of the transgressor can satisfy the unsatisfied claim for his obedience? Nothing. By the act of transgression he has proclaimed that the law is unworthy of regard, and may be trampled in the dust by every subject; and this testimony is decisive of the fact, it is *prima facie* evidence and uncounteracted by opposing evidence from the governor himself, authorizes and demands the belief, that the moral governor acquiesces in rebellion, that his law has ceased as truly as had a repeal of it issued from his own lips, and that he no more reigns with authority, than were he driven an insulted and degraded exile from his throne.

The conclusion then on this topic is, that the law of a perfect moral governor is in its very nature an unqualified claim for obedience on the part of every subject, and that whatever it may threaten, it claims of the subject nothing but obedience. It knows of no substitute or equivalent for disobedience on his part, nor yet on the part of the lawgiver himself; and therefore necessarily implies, that the lawgiver can

be satisfied with nothing but obedience on the part of the subject.

6. *The law of a perfect moral government expresses the law-giver's highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience.*

First. It expresses his highest approbation of obedience. By highest approbation, I mean not higher approbation than he may feel toward some other object, which cannot come into competition with this as an object of approbation. A perfect moral governor would feel *as high* approbation of the end of right moral action, as of right moral action itself. But by highest approbation, I mean, as high as he can feel toward any object, and higher than any which he can feel toward any of all the objects which can come into competition as objects of approbation.

The law of a perfect moral governor expresses as we have seen, his preference of the action required to its opposite, all things considered. This preference is of course an elective preference. It involves not only an act of will, but also affection, love, approbation of its object as it is in its own nature and tendency; and that degree of approbation which is suited to the worth and excellence of the object. Obedience to the perfect law of a perfect being is as we have seen the indispensable means of the best end, even of the highest happiness of the individual subject and of all others. As such a means of such an end, it is as excellent and valuable, as much to be loved, desired, approved and sought as the end itself. At the same time, these objects—obedience and the highest happiness of all, can never come into competition as objects of approbation. A perfect moral governor therefore, must regard obedience to his law with as high approbation as that with which he can regard any other object, even the highest happiness of all. Such approbation is necessarily involved in the very preference which he expresses in his law, otherwise the preference expressed in his law is not what it must be—a preference of obedience as it is in its true nature and tendency—the necessary means of the best end. Can he then feel so high a degree of approbation of any other object, which can come into competition with obedience as an object of approbation, as that which he feels for obedience? This is impossible and absurd. To suppose it, is to suppose, that per-

fect benevolence should feel as high approbation or love for that which is neither the highest happiness of all nor the necessary means of it, as it feels for these objects—which is to suppose that to be benevolence which is not benevolence.

Again; the only object, which, under a moral government, can be conceived to exist and to come into competition with obedience as an object of approbation to a moral governor, must be some supposable degree of happiness with exemption from some supposable degree of misery or suffering, in case of disobedience. It is admitted that a benevolent being approves of happiness, and of exemption from suffering in themselves considered. But no happiness, and no exemption from suffering which are conceivable in case of disobedience, or connected with it or depending on it, can be so highly approved by a benevolent ruler as obedience to a perfect law. Suppose what else we may, so long as obedience does not exist, the necessary means of the best end does not exist, nor the best end itself. Of course nothing exists or can exist without obedience, of which a benevolent ruler can so highly approve and love as obedience to his law. The expression of his preference in his law therefore, being an expression of his approbation of obedience as it is, is an expression of his highest approbation of obedience.

This reasoning might be further enforced by considering obedience in its particular relations as the means of the highest well-being of all. Such it is, not merely in its direct tendencies to produce the highest happiness of the obedient and of all others, but also in all its indirect tendencies. Not however to specify these, I only advert to one of them already stated—its tendency to support the authority of the moral governor. The obedience of his subjects is the testimony and the homage of every intellect and every heart, to his perfect qualification to reign; and pre-eminently enthrones him in rightful dominion. This is “the column of true majesty” in kings. When obedience exists, all exists that a perfect moral governor can propose or desire in respect to himself and his subjects. And this he tells them in the preference—the will given forth in his law. What other object can he so highly approve?

Secondly. The law of a perfect moral governor expresses his highest disapprobation of disobedience. By the highest dis-

approbation, I mean as high as he can feel toward any object, and higher than any which he can feel toward any of all the objects which can come into competition as objects of disapprobation. This is necessarily involved in the preference expressed in his law. This preference of the action required to its opposite involves aversion, hatred, disapprobation toward the opposite as it is in its true nature and tendency. It involves a degree of disapprobation, which is suited to the degree of turpitude and odiousness in disobedience. Now disobedience to the law of a perfect moral government, in its true nature and tendency, is the sure means of the worst end even of the highest misery of the subject and of all others. As such a means of such an end, it is as odious as fit to be abhorred and disapproved as the end itself. These objects however, disobedience and the highest misery of all, can never come into competition as objects of disapprobation. A perfect moral governor therefore, must regard disobedience with as high disapprobation as that with which he can regard the highest misery of all. Such disapprobation of disobedience is involved in the very preference expressed in his law. For this preference involves aversion, hatred, disapprobation of disobedience as it is in its true nature and tendency, that is as the means of the highest misery of all. Can he then feel so high a degree of disapprobation toward any other object which can come into competition with disobedience as an object of disapprobation, as he must feel toward disobedience? This is impossible. To suppose it is to suppose, that a being of perfect benevolence should feel as high disapprobation toward that which is neither the highest misery of all nor the means of it, as he feels toward these objects; which is to suppose a perfectly benevolent being, who is not perfectly benevolent.

This view of the subject is confirmed by considering the specific tendency of disobedience to destroy the authority of the governor. It not only tends as a kind of action to produce the highest misery of all, but as we have seen, it tends to subvert the authority of law and government, and thus to demolish the necessary and only security and safeguard against this fearful issue. Intent on its work of ruin, it storms and rases to the foundation the only citadel of defense and protection, that it may extend its desolations unhindered and unmoled. It thus destroys the last hope and refuge of benevo-

lence itself; forcing it to yield its authority and its designs to the ravages of fell malignity. What object so fit to be abhorred? What can be called law, which does not express supreme abhorrence of transgression? What lawgiver can be entitled to respect, who does not express in his law the highest disapprobation of this deed of death—this worst of evils as a cause—an evil equaled only by its appropriate effect, the absolute wretchedness of all? Thus, when disobedience exists, all exists that a perfect moral governor can deprecate, disapprove and abhor as the cause of evil and the source of woe. It is hostility and defeat to his entire and only design. It crosses and frustrates his only will—his whole will as given forth in his law. What other object can he so highly disapprove and abhor?

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## LECTURE V.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.—The nature of such a law further unfolded.—7. The law of a perfect Moral Government involves *sanctions*.—The relations of a Moral Governor to his kingdom more particularly considered.—Legal sanctions defined.—They establish or ratify the authority of the Moral Governor.—They consist in natural good promised to obedience, and in natural evil threatened to disobedience.—They establish the Moral Governor's authority as its *decisive proof*.—They become *decisive proof* of the Moral Governor's authority by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience.—It is not incredible that God in the Scriptures, should express his highest approbation of obedience and his highest disapprobation of disobedience to His law.

In preceding lectures, after defining a perfect moral government in general terms, I entered on the inquiry, *What is the law of a perfect moral government?* In answer to this inquiry, I attempted to show that *such a law is a decisive rule of action to subjects; that it must require benevolence as the best kind of action, and forbid selfishness as the worst kind of action conceivable on the part of subjects; that it requires benevolence as the sum of obedience, and forbids selfishness as the sum of disobedience on the part of subjects; that it expresses the lawgiver's preference of the action required to its opposite, all things considered; that it implies that the lawgiver can be satisfied with obedience and with nothing but obedience on the part of subjects; that it expresses the lawgiver's highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience on the part of subjects.*

Continuing these remarks concerning the nature of law, I proceed to say,

Seventhly: That the law of a perfect moral government involves *sanctions*.

In treating of this important and much controverted part of our subject, I propose to unfold the *nature*, the necessity, and the equity of legal sanctions in relation to the authority of the moral governor. Before however entering directly on these topics, I deem it important to consider more particularly than I have done, the relation which the moral governor sustains to his kingdom, the qualifications for the office, especially the moral character which he must possess and manifest as

the ground of his authority, and also the mode of manifesting his qualifications to his subjects.

Assuming then what is now properly assumed, that a perfect moral government is the best means of the best end, and therefore dictated and demanded by benevolence, I remark—

That a moral governor sustains a peculiar relation to his kingdom—a relation distinguished from every other by its peculiar object or end, and also by its peculiar function. Every relation of every moral being toward other moral beings which is dictated and demanded by benevolence, has its peculiar object or end, and hence also its peculiar function, or what are called in most cases its peculiar duties, including those acts or doings, or some general comprehensive mode of acting necessary to the accomplishment of the peculiar object or end of the relation. Accordingly, benevolence in a moral governor, while it aims at the highest happiness of all, is also committed to another great object or end which is peculiar to his relation, viz., to secure to the extent of his power, right moral action, and to prevent wrong moral action on the part of his subjects, *by means peculiar to the relation of a moral governor*. I say that benevolence is committed—pledged—in its very nature, and from the nature of this relation, to accomplish, as far as possible, this end by these means. Under a system of moral government, as I have before said, all—all depends on action. On the right and wrong moral action of its subjects depend its issues in happiness or misery. The weal or woe of the moral kingdom depends therefore, on what the moral governor does or fails to do, to secure right and to prevent wrong moral action on the part of his subjects. To secure right moral action with its results in happiness, and to prevent wrong moral action with its results in misery, by the peculiar influence of a perfect moral government, must be the grand object or end, and compared with any thing which can come into competition with it, must be the supreme object or end of a perfect moral governor. He may care for and promote individual well-being, only so far as this shall be consistent with securing the greatest amount possible to him of right moral action, as the means of the highest happiness of his kingdom by the peculiar influence of a perfect moral government. But to the accomplishment of this end BY THIS MEANS, every thing which interferes with it must be sacrificed; and

every thing which is necessary to the accomplishment of this end by THIS MEANS must be done, or the great end of benevolence must be defeated. To accomplish this particular end then—to secure the greatest amount of right moral action which he can secure, as that which is necessary to the highest well-being of all, by that influence which is peculiar to his relation as a moral governor, is the entire function of his office. A moral governor therefore from the very nature of his relation as a benevolent being, is under the necessity not merely of aiming to produce the highest happiness of his kingdom, but of aiming to produce it by securing the greatest amount of right moral action. Nor is he as some vainly imagine, under the necessity merely of aiming to produce the highest well-being of his kingdom by securing the greatest amount of right moral action which he can secure; but he is under the necessity of aiming to produce the highest amount of right moral action which he can secure *by the peculiar influence of a perfect moral government.*

*What then is the peculiar influence of a perfect moral government?* It is we have already seen, *the single influence of authority*—of that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey. This is that peculiar essential influence of a perfect moral government, without which such a government can have no existence. If right moral action can take place under other influences, it cannot take place as obedience to a moral governor without the influence of his authority on the subject. Other influences may be combined with this influence, not to say must be combined with it, from the very condition of all moral beings. But such other influences are entirely distinct from this influence, and though necessary to its existence, they are no part of it. They may exist without this influence; but when this influence does not exist, moral government does not exist. Right moral action done under the direct influence of natural good and evil as merely so much motive and without any regard to the will of another, is not done in submission to authority, and therefore is not obedience to a moral governor. Wrong moral action not done in rejection of authority, is not disobedience to a moral governor. The only influence by which one acting simply in the relation of a moral governor can control, or attempt to control the conduct of others as his subjects, is the single in-

fluence of authority. To suppose a moral governor therefore without authority, is to suppose a moral governor without the least governing influence, and is the absurdity of supposing one to possess an influence which he does not possess—of supposing a moral governor who is not a moral governor. When therefore there is no authority, there can be neither obedience nor disobedience to a moral governor—neither a moral government nor a moral governor. Authority then—the right to command which imposes an obligation to obey—is the peculiar, essential, constituting influence of moral government; so that where this influence exists moral government exists; and where this influence does not exist moral government does not exist.

Again; the authority of the moral governor—that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey—depends on his competence and disposition to govern in the best manner; that is, on his knowledge and power as qualifying him, and on his benevolence as disposing him to govern in the best manner, and on the decisive manifestations of these qualifications and this character to his subjects.

That the moral governor's authority depends on the knowledge and power which qualify him to govern in the best manner, and on the full manifestation of these qualifications for his office, is too obvious to be denied. These qualifications not manifested to the conviction of his subjects, would be in respect to constituting any part of the ground of his authority, as though they were not; and who can suppose that ignorance and imbecility can give that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey?

The qualifications of knowledge and power admit of different *modes* of manifestation in different cases—modes which are peculiar to these attributes, when compared with that of manifesting a perfect moral character. In that Being who possesses omniscience and almighty power, these attributes are abundantly manifested by his works of creation. Essential however, as the existence and the full manifestation of these qualifications are to the authority of the moral governor, it is in no respect necessary or important to my present purpose to dwell on either, since the existence and the manifestation of them in a moral governor in no respect depend on legal sanctions. Legal sanctions, whatever may be their

nature, their relations or their necessity, can neither impart the requisite attributes of knowledge and power, nor be necessary to prove their existence. At the same time, if we suppose the moral governor to furnish the most abundant proof of his qualifications in respect to knowledge and power, this fact does not imply that he possesses the shadow of authority; for his authority depends not merely on his knowledge and power but also on his benevolence, and the full proof or manifestation of it to his subjects. If then legal sanctions have any influence in establishing his authority, it must be some influence on, or in relation to, the great question of his benevolence.

That I may hereafter exhibit what I consider just and adequate views of legal sanctions, I now invite further and particular attention to benevolence on the part of the moral governor and its manifestation as one essential ground of his authority.

It is then undeniable, that benevolence is one thing in the character, or rather that it is itself the character of the moral governor, which, in connection with the requisite knowledge and power, constitutes the essential ground of his authority. When it is once decided on sufficient evidence, that he possesses that knowledge and power which qualify him to govern in the best manner—so far as such qualification depends on these attributes—and if this be not decided, the fact of his authority cannot be established; then the fact, and the only fact which remains to be proved for the purpose of fully establishing his authority, is the fact of his perfect moral character—his benevolence.

In this fact is involved another. The moral governor who is truly or perfectly benevolent, must feel the highest approbation of right moral action, and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action on the part of his subjects. These particular emotions in view of the true nature and tendency of right and wrong moral action, are inseparable from the nature of benevolence in every mind.

Again; benevolence in the specific form of it now stated as the character of the moral governor, must from the very nature and design of his relation, be supremely concerned and absolutely committed to secure so far as he is able, right moral action in every instance, and to prevent wrong moral

action in every instance by the influence of his authority. To accomplish this end by *this means*, is the great object of benevolence in a moral governor—the object by which this august relation is distinguished from every other relation. Benevolence on the part of a moral governor acting in this single relation, can be conceived to aim at no other object. The relation can be conceived to involve no other peculiar function than the accomplishment of this end by this means. We say then, that the grand, peculiar function of a moral governor is, by the influence of his authority, to aim to secure right, and to prevent wrong moral action on the part of his subjects. But if he who occupies the throne does not aim to secure right moral action, with the highest approbation of it as the means of the highest well-being of all, and to prevent wrong moral action, with the highest disapprobation of it as the means of the highest misery of all, then he is not benevolent—he does not possess the character which is requisite to his right to reign—he has no authority.

Besides, there is nothing in benevolence itself, on account of which it can be requisite to the moral governor's authority, except that it involves these feelings of highest approbation of right, and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action. Suppose benevolence to be any thing which it can be supposed to be, without involving the feelings of highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, and what is it but downright selfishness, showing no smile of favor for that which is the means of the highest welfare of all, and no frown of wrath for that which is the means of the highest misery of all? What is it but selfishness in the form of malignity, welcoming and conniving at crime and wretchedness, to subserve some private interest or purpose of its own? And what is there in such a character, to give to its possessor the right to control at will the conduct of others? Or soften the character as you will, if it does not involve the feelings of highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, its possessor can have no will in respect to right and wrong moral action in accordance with their true nature and tendency—no preference of the one to the other as the one is the means of the highest happiness of all, and the other the means of the highest misery of all. Law as a rule of action, cannot with truth express such a will or pref-

erence. Its language is the utterance of falsehood. The law-giver has no such will, no such preference as the very nature of law involves, and the very language of law expresses. Whatever then the thing may be, by whatever name it may be called—whatever amount of good it may impart in other relations; in a moral governor it is worthy only of execration and contempt. Call it benevolence if you will, but as the attribute of a moral governor, if it does not involve the highest approbation of right, and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, it can give him no right to reign—no authority. Benevolence—benevolence in the form of the highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, is essential to the authority of the moral governor.

Nor is this all. *The manifestation* of benevolence in the form of the highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, is also essential to the moral governor's authority.

The grand and peculiar object or end of a perfect moral governor, is to secure right and prevent wrong moral action on the part of his subjects, by the influence of his authority. But his subjects cannot be reached by this influence and act under it, or rather the influence itself cannot exist, except as it results from a *full manifestation* of that character of the governor which is a requisite ground of his authority, even perfect benevolence with its feelings of highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action. Indeed these feelings are as we have seen, those very elements of his perfect moral character, which constitute it an essential ground of his authority. It is obvious therefore, that the full and decisive manifestation of these feelings to the view of his subjects, is as necessary to his authority as the existence of the feelings themselves, or of the character which involves them. To suppose him to authorize a doubt in the minds of his subjects of this character and these feelings, is to suppose him to authorize a denial of his authority. For what right to command can he possess in the view of subjects, while he leaves it with them an unsettled question, whether he feels the highest approbation of right, and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action.

We may view this topic under other aspects. Responsibil-

ity for actual results in the weal and woe of his kingdom belongs to the moral governor, so far as these results depend on his maintaining the influence of his authority. His business—the grand function of his office, so to speak, is to secure, as far as may be, right moral action as the means of the highest well-being of all, and to prevent as far as may be, wrong moral action as the means of the highest misery of all, *by the single influence of his authority*. If the result in happiness fails, or if through wrong moral action the highest misery of all follows, in consequence of his failure to sustain and use the influence of his authority, the responsibility is, emphatically his own. The highest happiness of all, and the prevention of the highest misery of all, so far as they depend on the existence and influence of his authority, are committed to his keeping. He is responsible for these high interests of his kingdom, so far as they depend on the influence of his authority. His concern is to maintain this influence unimpaired and perfect, be the sacrifice what it may. Nothing of equal value can come into competition with the maintenance of his authority. When it is once decided that a perfect moral government is the best means of the best end, then it is also decided, that the maintenance of the moral governor's authority is the best means of the best end. His only alternative therefore, is, either to betray his trust, and thus to forfeit his character and his throne, or to manifest those feelings toward right and wrong moral action, which are the essential ground of his authority. Or thus, the moral governor from the nature of his relation, is to be looked to and confided in, as the faithful guardian of the welfare of his kingdom by the influence of his authority. To secure to his kingdom the highest happiness by this influence, and to be confided in accordingly, is the sole purpose and end of his high prerogative. Is he worthy, and does he show himself to be worthy of this confidence in the view of his subjects? If so, then he must manifest those feelings toward right and wrong moral action, which as a perfect being he must possess, and the manifestation of which is essential to his authority. How else can his subjects confide in that guardianship, which is to be extended to his kingdom only through the influence of his authority? What confidence can be reposed in one, who, for aught that appears to the contrary, is indifferent to the conduct of his subjects, on which the happiness or

misery of his kingdom depends, or who is or may prove himself to be, so far as any evidence to the contrary exists, the friend and patron of wrong moral action? And yet this is the only just view of his character. Failing to furnish decisive proof of his highest approbation of right, and of his highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, he furnishes not the shadow of proof, that he would express these feelings, even should the expression of them be necessary to prevent the universal wrong-doing, and with it the universal and perfect misery of his kingdom forevermore. I do not say, that the expression of these feelings is necessary to prevent this result in his kingdom. He however, in the case supposed, can furnish no proof to the contrary by what he does as a moral governor. His own declaration cannot be proof, for as yet his benevolence is not proved. Of course his veracity is not proved, and is therefore justly questioned. There can therefore be no possible proof, in the view of his subjects in the supposed case, that the supposed result would not follow; and no possible proof that the moral governor, foreseeing the result, would in any instance express the specified feelings toward right and wrong moral action, were it necessary to prevent the direful catastrophe; no proof, that he would manifest the highest approbation of right moral action in a single instance, or the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action in a single instance, were it necessary to prevent his kingdom from becoming a pandemonium of sin and misery. He proves himself to be a selfish being; and there is not the shadow of reason to conclude, that he would not consent to and so become the responsible author of, the unmitigated and endless woes of his kingdom, rather than express the feelings requisite to prevent them, through legal sanctions. What authority or right to reign can such a being possess? Or thus, a being who has the right to reign as a moral governor, is a benevolent being, and has of course the necessary feelings of a benevolent being toward right and wrong moral action, the feelings of highest approbation of the one, and of the highest disapprobation of the other. Having this character with its necessary emotions toward right and wrong moral action, he will furnish the requisite manifestation or proof of this material fact; since otherwise he can possess no authority in the view of his subjects; that is, cannot use the necessary means of the great

end of benevolence, or of the highest happiness of his kingdom, which benevolence requires him to use. Benevolence no more requires him to aim at this end, than it requires him to use the necessary means of it—than it requires him to manifest his highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action. Or thus: to suppose a perfect moral governor not to manifest the highest approbation of obedience to the best law, and the highest disapprobation of disobedience to the best law, is a palpable absurdity. It is to suppose him to use the influence of his authority, an influence which depends wholly on the manifestation of these feelings, and yet that he does not manifest the feelings on which the influence thus depends; that is, it is to suppose him to use an influence which can have no existence and which of course he does not use.

Does the moral governor then establish and sustain his authority? This question depends on another; does he fully manifest his highest approbation of right, and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action; does he show that he regards the one kind of action as the means of the highest well-being of all, and as such, as valuable as the end itself, and the other as the means of the highest misery of all, and as such, as evil as the end itself? This is the grand problem. I say then repeating the question, *does the moral governor show that he regards right moral action with supreme approbation, and wrong moral action with supreme disapprobation?* Does he so prove it as not to authorize a doubt of it? If he does not, then there is no proof of his benevolence and therefore no proof of his authority. There is proof to the contrary. Failing as the responsible guardian of the welfare of his kingdom fully to manifest these feelings toward right and wrong moral action—the highest approbation of the one as the means of the highest welfare of all, and the highest disapprobation of the other as the means of the highest misery of all—he decisively evinces the opposite character, and can make no claim or pretense to authority.

I remark once more, that the requisite manifestation and proof of the moral governor's benevolence, in the form of his highest approbation of right, and his highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, and in this way the requisite proof of his authority, must depend *not merely on what he does in other*

*relations, but also on what he does in this relation.* From inadequate views of the relation of a moral governor and the peculiar function of his office, it seems not to be an uncommon opinion, that he may by acts and doings in other relations, fully establish his character for benevolence; that, from his character thus established, may be inferred his appropriate feelings toward right and wrong moral action; and that in this way his authority or right to rule, so far as it depends on this character and these feelings, may also be fully established.

On this fundamental point it is readily conceded, that to the establishment of his authority as a moral governor, his character as manifested in all his other relations must be unimpeached and unimpeachable. It is indispensable to this purpose, that his acts and his doings in all his other relations, should not only be free from every thing which would evince the selfish principle, but consist in or include all the positive acts of beneficence which are demanded by his other relations. Otherwise he would furnish decisive proof against his benevolence, and of course against his authority. But it is now maintained, that these things—even the most decisive proofs of benevolence possible in his other relations merely—cannot prove his benevolence, and so establish his authority as a moral governor. They may furnish a degree of presumptive evidence—nay, the best evidence supposable in the case—of that character which entitles him to assume the relation of a moral governor. But no matter what proofs of his benevolence he may furnish in his other relations, they are not sufficient proofs of his benevolence, if in this relation he does not perform that appropriate function of his office which benevolence requires him to perform. To what purpose is it, that a being furnishes every possible proof of his benevolence in some or in many relations, if in another relation he utterly fails to perform the duties or functions which in this relation benevolence requires him to perform? All his conduct in other relations be it ever so unexceptionable, *may be* the dictate of the selfish principle; while his failure to perform the duties or functions of this relation, is decisive proof that it is the dictate of the selfish principle.

Now the moral governor sustains a peculiar relation—a relation widely different from every other, and involving a peculiar responsibility and a peculiar function. He is the

responsible guardian of a kingdom's welfare, as its weal or woe depends on what he does, to bring his subjects under the influence of his authority. The grand and peculiar function of his relation or office is to bring this influence to bear on his subjects, that by it he may secure right and prevent wrong moral action, the one being the means of the highest well-being of all, and the other the means of the highest misery of all. The question of his benevolence therefore, depends not merely on what he does or has done in other relations, but also on what he does in this relation. Does he as the moral governor, perform the peculiar function of his office?—does he create the influence of his authority by what he does in this relation? If not—if he does not bring his subjects under this influence, so that they in acting must either submit to it or resist it, then he is recreant to the grand and only function of his office, and betrays the trust which he pretends to assume. He thus shows himself not to be benevolent, and of course to possess no authority. Benevolence therefore, requires him to manifest his benevolence by what he does in the relation of a moral governor, and in this way to establish his authority.

Nor is this all. Benevolence requires him also to manifest in his relation as a moral governor, his benevolence in that form which is peculiar and appropriate to this relation, viz., in its necessary feelings toward right and wrong moral action on the part of subjects. The happiness or misery of his kingdom depends on his showing himself to feel toward right and wrong moral action, as a benevolent being must feel. If he does not show these feelings, he shows himself not to be benevolent. As we have seen, all that there is in the nature of benevolence which qualifies him to rule and can give him the right to rule, is, that it involves these feelings and will manifest them, for the accomplishment of the great end of benevolence. If benevolence has any peculiar feelings toward happiness and misery, it must have peculiar feelings toward right moral action as the means of the highest happiness of all, and toward wrong moral action as the means of the highest misery of all. If benevolence requires the moral governor to make a full and decisive manifestation of his feelings toward the highest happiness of all and the highest misery of all, then it requires him also to manifest not less decisively its peculiar

feelings toward right moral action, as the means of the highest happiness of all, and toward wrong moral action as the means of the highest misery of all. But if he does not manifest his benevolence in its peculiar and necessary feelings toward right and wrong moral action, by what he does in his relation as a moral governor, he cannot manifest it at all; and the proof from this is decisive, that he is not benevolent, and can have no right to rule; nay more, that he is not willing to use the best and only proper means of securing the highest happiness of all and preventing the highest misery of all, and therefore is a selfish being and in moral character, nothing better than a fiend.

Thus plain is it, that a moral governor is under an absolute necessity of maintaining his authority in the view of his subjects, if he maintains it at all, by what he does in the relation of a moral governor; in other words, by manifesting in this relation his benevolence, in the form of his highest approbation of right moral action, and his highest disapprobation of wrong moral action on the part of his subjects. If he would use the peculiar and essential influence of a perfect moral government, the influence of authority—if he would establish his right to reign, he must appear before his kingdom as the unchangeable friend and patron of right moral action, and the uncompromising enemy and avenger of wrong moral action, showing that he loves the one as he loves the highest happiness of his kingdom, and that he hates the other as he hates the highest misery of his kingdom. He must appear in all the excellence and loveliness and majesty of this character, without a cloud or a spot to obscure its splendor. The glory of his rightful dominion must be as the sun shining in his strength.

In view of what has now been said concerning the relation of the moral governor to his kingdom, his qualifications for the office, and especially concerning the moral character which he must possess and manifest as the ground of his authority, I now proceed to the direct consideration of legal sanctions. My object is, to ascertain their nature, to show their necessity to the existence of law and moral government, and to unfold their equity in respect to the degrees of natural good and evil which are requisite to their design. For the purpose of presenting what I deem just and adequate views of the subject, I propose to define, in somewhat general terms,

the phrase *legal sanctions*, or *sanctions of law*, and to explain and defend the several parts of the definition.

Legal sanctions then—by which I mean the sanctions of the law of a perfect moral government—consist *in that natural good promised to obedience, and in that natural evil threatened to disobedience by the moral governor, which establish or ratify his authority as the decisive or necessary proof of it, by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience and his highest disapprobation of disobedience, and which for this purpose include the highest possible degree of natural good in each case of obedience, and the highest possible degree of natural evil in each case of disobedience.*

This definition may be fully comprised in the following particular propositions :

1st. Legal sanctions establish or ratify the authority of the moral governor.

2d. They consist in natural good promised to obedience, and in natural evil threatened to disobedience, by the moral governor.

3d. They establish or ratify the moral governor's authority, as the decisive proof of it.

4th. They become the decisive proof of his authority, by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

5th. They are the necessary proof of his authority, as being the necessary manifestations and proof of his benevolence, in the necessary form of his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

6th. They include the highest possible degree of natural good in each case of obedience, and the highest possible degree of natural evil in each case of disobedience.

These several particular propositions I propose to explain and to vindicate.

1st. *Legal sanctions establish or ratify the authority of the moral governor.* If legal sanctions are things of any significance, they sustain this particular relation to law—they establish or ratify it as an authoritative rule of action to subjects. To speak of law as an authoritative rule of action, is only to say, that it is a rule of action given by one who has authority or that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey.

That which gives to the law of a moral government its binding force, or which constitutes its whole influence or character as a decisive rule of action, considered as the will of one which ought to be obeyed because it is his will, is the authority of the lawgiver or moral governor. Whether we speak of legal sanctions as establishing the authority of law, or establishing law as an authoritative rule of action, all that we can mean is, not that they constitute but determine or establish the fact, that it is the law of one who has the right to command—who has authority. The authority of law therefore—its binding force or influence upon the subject, if established at all, must be established by establishing the authority of him whose law it is—by showing that he has that right to command which imposes an obligation to obey. This being done, all is done which can give force to law, or invest it in the view of subjects, with that characteristic which constitutes it an authoritative and decisive rule of action to them. Nothing can be, nothing can need to be established or sanctioned, for the purpose of giving to law all the binding force which law can have, except, that he who assumes the right to rule actually possesses and shows himself to possess the right. The peculiar influence of legal sanctions then, is to establish or ratify, in the view of his subjects the authority of the moral governor.

2d. *Legal sanctions consist in natural good promised to obedience, and in natural evil threatened to disobedience by the moral governor.* By this I mean, that in respect to the matter of them, they consist *exclusively* in such natural good and evil. Whatever natural good and evil are as sanctions, and whatever else may be necessary to their being sanctions of law, they are the only things which are or can be sanctions of law. All men concur in calling natural good and natural evil annexed to law in the manner now specified, legal sanctions. Nor can this language be applied to any thing else, with the least propriety or truth. Other things which are not legal sanctions may be necessary on the part of the moral governor, that he may establish his authority by natural good and natural evil as legal sanctions. Other things may be necessary to this purpose, because the want of them would be proof against his authority, and thus prevent the promised good and threatened evil from sanctioning his authority, however adapted in

themselves to the purpose. The impossibility that the moral governor should establish or sustain his authority by other means than by annexing natural good and evil to his law as sanctions, I shall attempt to show hereafter. He cannot do this as we have already seen, merely by furnishing the requisite evidence of his qualifications to reign in respect to knowledge and power. If in addition to this we suppose, that by giving the best rule of action, and by a blameless and kind deportment in all other relations than that of a moral governor, he does what he can without natural good and evil as legal sanctions, to *establish and sustain* his authority, still none of these things nor all of them combined can be legal sanctions; in other words, they cannot *sanction* his authority. Indeed this supposition is wholly inadmissible, for all these things may be done, and be justly believed to be done by a selfish being who of course can possess no authority. His authority could not be established by these things. When all this is done, more must be done, or there can be no legal sanctions. The best evidence of his authority must be furnished of which the nature of the case admits. But such evidence cannot be furnished without the promise to obedience of a proper degree of natural good, and the threatening to disobedience of a proper degree of natural evil. This is the evidence and the only evidence, which when any thing else supposable has been done, determines—settles the question of his authority beyond reasonable doubt. The *sanctioning* influence then, whatever it is, pertains exclusively to natural good promised to obedience as a reward, and natural evil threatened to disobedience as a penalty. What is true in the nature of things however, may more fully appear hereafter. I now appeal to the universal conceptions of mankind, as evinced by the only authorized use of language. On this ground I claim, that neither the act of prescribing the best rule of action nor a blameless and kind deportment, nor both combined, nor any thing else except natural good as the reward of obedience, and natural evil as the penalty of disobedience, can with the least propriety or truth be called legal sanctions. The authority of the moral governor then, cannot be either wholly or partially sanctioned by other things than natural good as a legal reward, and natural evil as a legal penalty. If his authority is not fully and exclusively sanctioned by these, it is not sanctioned at all.

Legal sanctions then in the matter of them, consist exclusively in natural good promised by the moral governor to obedience, and in natural evil threatened to disobedience.

3d. *Legal sanctions, or natural good and evil as legal sanctions, establish or ratify the moral governor's authority as the decisive proof of it.* The word *sanction* denotes a particular kind of evidence or proof, viz., that which is the decisive and necessary proof of that of which it is the sanction. I shall now speak of it only as *decisive* proof, proposing to consider its *necessity* hereafter. In some cases of moral evidence it is justly deemed too weak to authorize belief, at least for practical purposes. This may be owing to its intrinsic insufficiency, or to its being opposed to contrary evidence of the same kind. In some cases of opposing evidence of this kind, we speak of the balance of evidence or probability as in favor of what we believe. In some such cases of belief, the degree of our assent or the strength of our conviction, is not such as to exclude all doubt, or is at least less than it would be, were there no opposing evidence. What we believe is not fully or decisively established—there is not that ground for unqualified belief which there would be, were the evidence wholly uncounteracted by evidence on the other side. By *decisive* proof I mean, not merely a slight balance of probability, nor merely what may be called *sufficient* proof; but I mean that which implies the absence of all opposing evidence or of all ground for doubt or hesitation, and which in its own nature, there being no opposing evidence, fully confirms and in this sense establishes or ratifies that of which it is the proof.

Now to every one tolerably acquainted with the use of language, it must be obvious, that nothing can be truly and properly called a *sanction*, except under the idea of it as a *proof*; nor unless it implies, in the circumstances or case in which it is a sanction, the absence of all opposing evidence or proof, nor unless it is conceived to be a *decisive* proof, a proof which in its nature so establishes or ratifies that of which it is the sanction, as to remove all reasonable doubt. To illustrate by an example. The sanction of a treaty with this country, is the consent of the President and Senate. This consent is not only a proof of the reality or validity of a treaty, but a proof which implies the absence of all opposing evidence or proof, and which in its own nature establishes or ratifies, to the exclu-

sion of all doubt, the reality or validity of the instrument or writing called a treaty. It is under this view of it as essential to a sanction, that such consent is called a sanction.

In accordance with this view of the nature of a sanction in one respect, I maintain that legal sanctions are *the decisive proof* of the authority of a moral governor. Or thus I maintain, that natural good and evil as legal sanctions, are that kind of evidence or proof of the moral governor's authority, which implies the absence of all opposing evidence, and which being in its own nature the best evidence of which the nature of the case admits, establishes or ratifies his authority beyond all reasonable doubt or hesitation. I do not say that natural good and evil, be the degree of them what it may, are legal sanctions in a case in which there is evidence from any other source against the moral governor's authority. On the contrary I maintain, that they cannot be legal sanctions, except in a case in which there is no such opposing evidence, and that therefore, as legal sanctions, they imply the absence of all evidence against the moral governor's authority. It is under this idea or notion of them as legal sanctions that they exclude all doubt of his authority, while in their own nature and tendency when thus uncounteracted by opposing evidence, they establish or ratify his authority. With this explanation in view, I now ask, what can be more obvious in the use of language, than that natural good and evil considered as legal sanctions, are universally conceived of as the decisive proof of the law-giver's authority? If as legal sanctions they prove nothing, then they *sanction* nothing; and how then, or in what possible meaning can they be called *sanctions*? If as sanctions they prove or establish any thing, it must be as we have seen, the authority of the moral governor. And how can they establish or ratify this, that is, confirm it beyond all reasonable doubt, except as implying the absence of all opposing evidence, and as being in their own nature *decisive proof* of his authority?

4th. *Legal sanctions or natural good and evil as legal sanctions, become decisive proof of the moral governor's authority, by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.* Our object is now to show *how or in what manner* natural good and evil become decisive proof of the moral governor's author-

ity. This cannot be, as we have before shown, by proving his qualifications for the office in respect to knowledge and power. These qualifications and the requisite proof of them must be presupposed. Nor can it be, except in a case in which there is opposing or counteracting evidence of any kind whatever. For what we claim and all that we claim is, that natural good and evil are legal sanctions, by being such in their true nature and tendency, as to be decisive proof of his authority, when in their influence as evidence, they are uncounteracted by opposing evidence. In this case, we say that they become decisive proof of his authority, by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and of his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

While natural good and evil constitute the matter of legal sanctions, they do not, considered simply as natural good and evil, become or constitute legal sanctions. Natural good proffered or conferred, and natural evil threatened or inflicted, may sustain very different relations; and it is in respect to these different relations, that we conceive and speak of them as very different things. Natural good under one relation we call *payment*, and under another *hire, wages* and the like. We call it *reward* also, as conceived of under very different relations. The word *reward* is often applied to the consequence of wickedness. Natural evil under one relation—that is, when inflicted with the design of reforming an offender, we call *chastisement, discipline*, and sometimes *punishment*; while evil inflicted with no such design is also often called *punishment*. What then, is the precise nature of a *legal reward and of a legal penalty or punishment*? What is the peculiar relation of natural good and evil *as sanctions of law*? And here, according to what has been already said, it is obvious, that to become sanctions of law, they must sustain some relation to law; and not only so, but in this particular relation to law, they must tend to secure or render effectual, by establishing or ratifying the peculiar and appropriate influence of law, which as we have seen, is its authority or the authority of the lawgiver. Here then we have a sure criterion by which to determine what causes natural good promised to obedience, and natural evil threatened to disobedience to be *legal sanctions*; viz., that they tend to secure and render effectual the peculiar influence of law—the authority of the lawgiver or moral governor—by

establishing or ratifying this authority. What we now claim is, that they have this tendency *as decisive* proof of his authority, by manifesting his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

It will not be denied, that natural good promised as the reward of obedience, is a decisive manifestation of approbation of obedience, by him who promises it ; nor, that natural evil threatened as the penalty of disobedience, is a decisive manifestation of disapprobation of disobedience, by him who threatens it. The promise and the threatening would be all which the case would admit of, prior to any acts of obedience or disobedience. If now we suppose the fulfillment of the promise in every case of obedience, and the execution of the threatening in every case of disobedience, the most impressive manifestation of the feelings specified is made which is conceivable. And yet the promise of reward, and the threatening of penalty prior to all acts of obedience and of disobedience, being all the evidence of which the nature of the case admits, are as *truly decisive proof* of the feelings specified, as would be the actual conferring of the reward in the case of obedience, and the actual inflicting of the penalty in the case of disobedience. In either case, the feeling of approbation of obedience, and the feeling of disapprobation of disobedience would be fully and decisively proved to be real.

Nor is this all. The degree of natural good promised or conferred as the reward, and the degree of natural evil threatened or inflicted as the penalty, would be, in all just estimation, the criteria and measure of *the degree* of the feelings of which they would be the manifestations. When therefore, the natural good conferred in such a case on the obedient subject is such in degree as to manifest on the part of him who confers it, the highest approbation of obedience, and the natural evil inflicted on the disobedient subject, manifests on the part of him who inflicts it the highest disapprobation of disobedience, then supposing no counteracting evidence, the authority of the moral governor is established or ratified. He thus manifests the feelings which are essential to his character as a perfect moral governor. He thus decisively proves the fact, and the only fact which needs to be proved in the case, viz., that he possesses that moral character which invests him with the right to govern—that is, with authority. Having

already evinced, by their proper evidence, his qualifications in respect to knowledge and power for his responsible office, and having furnished by his deportment, his acts and doings, no evidence against his perfect moral character, he now proves what only remains to be proved—that he has the feelings and the character, and will act the part, of a benevolent moral governor. By thus showing through the medium of natural good and evil, his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience, he shows that he regards obedience to the best law as it is, the best kind of action, and disobedience to the best law as the worst kind of action—the one, as that which, in its true nature and tendency, is the means of the highest well-being of all, and the other as that which in its true nature and tendency is the means of the highest misery of all. These are the feelings and the only feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action. This decisive manifestation of them through the requisite degree of natural good as a reward, and the requisite degree of natural evil as a penalty, is therefore decisive proof of benevolence, and of course, decisive proof of authority. Indeed, suppose what other mode of manifesting these feelings and this character we may, if any such mode were supposable, how feeble and unimpressive it must be, compared with that which would be made through that degree of natural good as a reward, and of natural evil as a penalty, which should be the expression of these feelings? How would any other evince that weakness of heart which would provoke contempt, when compared with the power and majesty of emotions which, for the sake of the highest universal good, express themselves in such results of happiness to the obedient, and of misery to the disobedient!

Thus natural good and evil as legal sanctions, become decisive proof of the moral governor's authority, by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience. They reveal his moral character, holding forth, in defiance of doubt, his perfect benevolence, in its essential emotions of love of right and abhorrence of wrong moral action. They show the full strength of his will, fixed on securing so far as may be, the best means of the best end, and on preventing so far as may be, the sure means of the worst end. Thus they bring

out, in full and vivid manifestation, the glories of Him who occupies the throne. Removing all ground of doubt in respect to that character which gives him the right to command, they tend to secure the full force and efficacy of his authority in the confidential homage and unqualified submission of his subjects, and, with these, the perfect blessedness of his kingdom.

REMARK.

It is not to be thought strange or incredible, that the sanctions of the law of God, as these are presented in the Scriptures, should express his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience. Without here affirming that such sanctions are necessary to establish his authority as the perfect moral governor of his moral kingdom, I now ask, who can show that they are not necessary for this purpose? Who can show that the legal sanctions, which as we have seen, would fully establish his authority, are not necessary to establish it? If this cannot be shown, then let it not be thought incredible that such sanctions are annexed to the law of that Being who reigns over the moral universe. The incredibility of this is further diminished, if we reflect that a system of moral government which includes these sanctions, includes the highest degree of influence to secure right and to prevent wrong moral action, which can be conceived to be essential to a moral government. Suppose what other system of moral government we may, it cannot involve much of the influence to secure right and prevent wrong moral action which this system involves. If any other system would involve decisive proof of the perfect qualifications of the moral governor in respect to knowledge and power, of the excellence of his law as a rule of action, and of his absolute perfection in moral character, so does this. But besides all this, and more than all this, the system now maintained presents motives in natural good and evil which admit of no parallel, and which bind the will to right moral action, not indeed by physical force, but by the most imperious necessity by which it can be bound—the necessity of right moral action to secure perfect happiness, and to avoid perfect misery forever. And more still. In proof that the action required ought to be done, and that its opposite ought not to be done, it reveals

through these sanctions, the will of an infinitely perfect being, unveiling his infinite benevolence in its highest approbation of obedience, and its highest disapprobation of disobedience. Thus there is no truth and no evidence of truth, which can be employed to secure right moral action, and which can be supposed to be essential to a perfect moral government, which the system now maintained does not employ, and employ in the most impressive manner. There is no such truth in respect to God, and the creatures of God formed in his image, which is fitted to secure the great end of their being, which is not made known in its full power to impress and control. Pre-eminently by this system is God revealed—God, the depths of whose wisdom none can fathom—God, the thunder of whose power who can understand—God, in the enrapturing glories of his goodness, smiling his approbation of right moral action, and recoiling from wrong moral action in wrathful abhorrence! What majesty and awful love! More cannot be conceived. The universe of truth, of evidence, of motive, is exhausted to give every essential perfection which can be conceived to this system of moral government, and to bind the will of moral beings to secure their own perfection in character and in happiness. Who then shall count it strange, that God should place his moral creation under such an influence? Who knows—who can prove—that this degree of influence is not necessary to the best results in happiness, and therefore demanded by infinite goodness? Who knows—who can prove—that the highest blessedness of the moral universe—not to add also, the prevention of the perfect misery of all—does not require this manifestation of God through the medium of legal sanctions, that all may see and know what a friend he is to right moral action, and what an enemy he is to wrong moral action? Who knows—who can prove—that the Book, which declares that an infinitely perfect Being employs such an influence for such a purpose, declares a falsehood?

## LECTURE VI.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.—The nature of such a law further unfolded.—7. The law of a perfect Moral Government involves *sanctions*, (continued.)—5th. Legal sanctions the *necessary* proof of the Moral Governor's authority, as the necessary manifestations and proofs of his benevolence in the form of his approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.—This shown by proving (1.) that legal sanctions are in some respect necessary as the proof of the Moral Governor's authority; (2.) that they are necessary for this purpose, as the necessary proofs of his benevolence; and (3.) that they are necessary proofs of his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience and highest disapprobation of disobedience.—The (1) and (2) of these arguments are treated in this lecture.—(1.) Legal Sanctions are necessary in some respect as proof of the Moral Governor's authority.—Argued from the import of the phrase legal sanctions; from the nature of the law of a perfect Moral Government; from the nature of a law or rule of action without sanctions; from the fact that conformity and nonconformity to a rule without sanctions would subvert the Moral Governor's authority.—(2.) They are necessary as proofs of the Governor's authority, as they are the necessary proofs of his benevolence.—Reason given why attempts to prove the benevolence of God from the light of nature are so unsuccessful.

IN the last lecture I proposed to show, that *legal sanctions, or the sanctions of the law of a perfect moral government, consist in that natural good promised to obedience, and in that natural evil threatened to disobedience by the moral governor, which establish or ratify his authority as the decisive and necessary proof of it, by manifesting his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience, and which include the highest possible degree of natural good in each case of obedience, and the highest possible degree of natural evil in each case of disobedience.*

This proposition was divided into several particular propositions; the four following of which I explained, and endeavored to support, viz.:

1st. That legal sanctions establish or ratify the authority of the moral governor.

2d. That they consist in the matter of them, exclusively in natural good promised to obedience, and in natural evil threatened to disobedience by the moral governor.

3d. That they establish or ratify the moral governor's authority as the decisive proof of it.

4th. That they become the decisive proof of it, by manifest-

ing his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

I now propose in this and the following lectures to show *the necessity* of legal sanctions, and for this purpose, to explain and prove the fifth of the particular propositions before stated, viz. :

5th. That legal sanctions are *the necessary* proof of the moral governor's authority, as the *necessary* manifestations and proofs of his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

This proposition I shall attempt to establish by showing—

(1.) That legal sanctions are in some respect or under some relation, necessary as the proof of the moral governor's authority.

(2.) That they are necessary for this purpose, as the necessary manifestations or proofs of his benevolence, and—

(3.) That they are necessary for this purpose, as the necessary manifestations or proofs of his benevolence in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and of his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

(1.) Legal sanctions are necessary *in some respect or under some relation*, as the proof of the moral governor's authority.

This will appear—

In the first place, *from the import of the phrase, legal sanctions*. I have already remarked, that the word *sanction* denotes a particular kind of evidence or proof, viz., that which is *the decisive* and *necessary* proof of that of which it is the sanction. I have attempted to show that it denotes *a decisive proof*—that is, a proof which implies the absence of all opposing proof or evidence, and fully establishes or ratifies that of which it is the sanction. I now propose to show, that it denotes *a necessary* proof of that of which it is the sanction. By this I mean, that it is that, without which there is not only no proof of that of which it is the sanction, but proof to the contrary. On this point, I appeal to the example already referred to. Without the consent of the President and Senate, there is and can be not only no proof of the reality or validity of a treaty between this nation and another, but there is decisive proof to the contrary. We may suppose the evidence of the fact in other respects to be what it may, still without the con-

sent specified, no instrument purporting to be such a treaty can possess the least validity. On the contrary, the want of such consent is decisive proof of its validity. Thus plain is it, that the word *sanction* denotes that which is the necessary proof of that of which it is the sanction—necessary as being that without which there can be no proof of the fact or truth to be proved in the case, but must be proof to the contrary. Since then the genus, as logicians speak, is always included in the species, it follows, that *legal* sanctions, in the universal conceptions of men, are the necessary proof of that of which they are the sanctions. In the second place, the same thing is evident from *the nature of the law* of a perfect moral government. It is essential to the nature of such a law, that it be, and that it be fully *proved* to be, an expression of the law-giver's preference of obedience to disobedience, of his satisfaction with obedience and with nothing but obedience on the part of the subject, and of his highest approbation of obedience, and of his highest disapprobation of disobedience. But no possible proof without legal sanctions can be furnished, that it is an expression of such feelings. The moral governor may furnish all possible evidence of kind or benevolent feelings in all his other relations, he may prescribe the best rule of action in this relation, and all this may be prompted by other feelings than those of true benevolence; may be prompted by the feelings and purposes of a purely selfish mind. There can be nothing in the case to warrant the conclusion that he is not actuated by purely selfish designs; nor that he has the feelings toward right and wrong moral action, which his law in words expresses. Rather, there is decisive proof to the contrary. As a perfect moral governor, he is as we have seen, under the necessity of manifesting these feelings; and as a benevolent being will manifest them. He cannot be a benevolent moral governor without having these feelings, nor without making a full and decisive manifestation of them. Not to manifest them therefore, is proof decisive that they do not exist. Nor is this all. This manifestation of these feelings toward right and wrong moral action must be made, as we have also seen, if made at all, by what he does in the relation of a moral governor. But he can do nothing in this relation, except give the best rule of action, annex sanctions to the rule, and execute them as occasion shall occur in the conduct of subjects. Merely

to give the best rule of action will not make the requisite manifestation. This act alone is entirely consistent with selfish designs on his part. It is not the best evidence of the feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action, of which the nature of the case admits, and therefore not all the evidence which the case requires. It is only when the proof from legal sanctions is added that the evidence becomes all that the nature of the case admits of and requires, and is therefore decisive. I am not now saying that legal sanctions will fully prove the lawgiver's preference of obedience to disobedience. Nor am I now saying any thing of *the mode* in which natural good and evil in the form of sanctions become the proof of the expression of such a preference. I am only saying, that without legal sanctions there can be *no proof* of such a preference on the part of the moral governor, that whatever else may be necessary, natural good and evil as sanctions are necessary to evince the reality of those feelings which the language of law expresses, and that the want of such sanctions is full proof that such feelings on the part of the lawgiver do not exist; and of course that what is called law in such a case, if any thing can be so called, is not law; and therefore there is no lawgiver having authority.

We may view this topic in another light. The law of a perfect moral government is an authoritative rule of action. Can then a rule of action without natural good and evil as the sanctions of its authority, or which is the same thing, of the lawgiver's authority, be regarded as an authoritative rule of action? Is it in this sense a law? Plainly to promulge such a rule in the form of a command—to give it forth in the manner of one having the right to rule, claiming for it the majesty of law, and for himself the unqualified homage of his subjects, would be a burlesque on all legislation. Can a moral governor claim the submission of the will of every subject to his will, and furnish no evidence that he will reward obedience and punish disobedience; or rather furnish decisive proof that he will do neither! Do you call this a law—an authoritative rule of action? No misnomer can be more palpable—none more ridiculous. Is this performing the high function of his office? Is such a rule of action the only means which one standing before his kingdom as its rightful sovereign, and the supreme guardian of its welfare, must use to promote and protect the

highest happiness of all? Such a rule would not only leave this great end, which he is bound to protect, unprotected, and show that it is wholly uncared for by him who is responsible for its protection, but it would be an invitation to wrong doing from the throne itself. For not to promise to reward obedience, and not to threaten to punish disobedience, is not only a pledge not to reward the one and not to punish the other, but virtually to threaten to punish obedience, and to promise to reward disobedience; since not to reward is in a degree to punish obedience, and not to punish is in a degree to reward disobedience. Such a rule of action therefore, instead of having the nature and tendency of law, instead of being adapted to secure the highest happiness of all, would tend to secure the highest misery of all. Who does not know this? Who would be governed, influenced at all, by a law without sanctions as an authoritative rule of action? Who would be concerned about doing or not doing the will of another, from whom to say the least, obedience has nothing to hope, and disobedience nothing to fear? He gives no security, furnishes no evidence that the obedient shall be protected and blessed and the disobedient be punished—none that he will not reverse the treatment of the two classes, should his sinister and selfish designs demand it, or rather, he furnishes good reason to believe that he will reverse it. Who then could respect his character or his will, and regard him as entitled to exercise the prerogative of absolute dominion, who confide in him as the friend and protector of a kingdom's happiness, who submit to his will as law? He may in words, express kind wishes, and in form propound the best rule of action. He may show kindness in every other relation. But as a moral governor he shows none to his kingdom. He is recreant to the high function of his office. He betrays his trust as the guardian of universal happiness. He sinks the power and majesty of law into the weakness of ineffective wishes, and justly incurs the scorn and contempt due to unmasked hypocrisy. He thus defeats the great and sole end of moral government, and tempts his subjects to war on each other and himself, without the shadow of restraint from law and authority.

Again; a rule of action without sanctions, viewed in the most favorable aspect, is justly considered as mere *advice*. But *advice* be the form of it what it may, is not law. The

difference between them demands consideration. Advice be it ever so wise and good, is a mere declaration of what is best to be done. It implies no will or preference on the part of the adviser of that which is advised to its opposite. It would still be advice, though attended with a preference of the opposite doing, and though prompted solely by sinister designs. Law is the most unequivocal expression of the unqualified, absolute will or preference of the lawgiver, that what is commanded should be done. Compliance with the one is discretionary on the part of him to whom it is given. He has the right unquestionable and perfect, to rejudge the decision of the giver, and is responsible to none for his individual judgment in the case. He violates no right of another merely by rejecting the counsel which is given. Compliance with the other admits not of a question, even in thought. Law decides—settles the question of what ought and ought not to be done, by superseding the right of all further inquiry. Its violation is the violation of a right the most sacred and inviolable of all rights—the right to control that, on which the highest happiness of each and of all depends. Advice whether complied with or not, involves in respect to him to whom it is given, not the least good or evil which depends on the will of him who gives it. Law enforces compliance by results in good and evil to the subject which depend on the will of the lawgiver, and which, while as motives to right reason, they must be decisive and final for obedience, reveal the perfect character and perfect will of him from whom it emanates. Advice carries with it no binding influence from the character or will of him who gives it, to the will of him to whom it is given. Law, instead of leaving compliance with its claim to the mere option, to the uninfluenced will of the subject, binds his will to compliance—not indeed by physical force or necessity, but by that obligation which is imposed by the right to command, the strongest influence by which the will can be bound. This, as we have seen, is the grand, peculiar, essential influence of law—the influence of authority. But to prescribe a rule of action without sanctions, as the law of a moral government, is to give mere advice, which can possess no authority. It is to divest law of its peculiar and essential nature and influence, and to degrade it to a level with the counsels of imbecility, by committing the question of what ought and ought not to be done

to the judgment and will of an equal. It is for the moral governor to disclaim, in the most formal manner, all authority or right to rule. It is an open avowal that he has not the character which entitles him to exercise the prerogative of dominion—that he is a governor who neither has nor can have the least governing influence. Surely a rule of action, a law without sanctions, involving such a palpable dereliction of all claim or pretense to rightful authority, cannot be an authoritative rule of action—cannot be the law of a perfect moral government.

In the third place, a law or rule of action without sanctions, is a decisive proof that the lawgiver, either by imbecility or by selfishness, or by both, is utterly disqualified to rule. As a proof on the question of his qualification to rule, it is altogether equivalent to refusing to reward obedience, and to punish disobedience, when they exist. In such a case, the moral governor cannot be supposed to be both competent and disposed to execute legal sanctions, for then he would execute them. He must then, either be both incompetent and indisposed to execute them—in which case he would be disqualified to rule in every essential respect—or, he must be incompetent and yet disposed, or competent and indisposed, to execute them. Now, he is either able to confer a reward on the obedient, in the form of protection and favor, or he is not. If he is not able to confer a reward, then he is the subject of an imbecility which is an utter disqualification for office. If he is able to confer a reward then, by conferring none, he manifests no approbation of obedience, when the public good demands that he should, and when, were he truly benevolent he would manifest it by rewarding the obedient. He stands before his kingdom therefore, convicted of indifference, or aversion to obedience—to the very thing on which the highest happiness of his kingdom depends. He thus shows himself to be, not a benevolent but a selfish being, and of course to be utterly disqualified to govern. Again; he is either able to inflict a penalty on the disobedient, or he is not. If he is not, then he is disqualified to govern by his imbecility. If he is able, then by inflicting no penalty for disobedience, he manifests no disapprobation of disobedience, when the public good demands that he should, and when were he truly benevolent, he would manifest it by the infliction of penalty. He stands before his

kingdom therefore, convicted of indifference to, or approbation of disobedience, the very thing which tends to produce the highest misery of his kingdom. He thus shows himself the unconcerned spectator of disobedience on the part of his subjects, or rather the open patron of disobedience, and the open enemy of the public good. He occupies the place of the only guardian of the public good, as this depends on his manifesting his highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action. Indifference to either is unmasked enmity to the public good. His disqualification to rule on either supposition, is decisively proved. He gives a law without sanctions, and the fact must be traced either to incompetence or indisposition to execute sanctions, or to both. In either case, he is proved to be disqualified to govern. Legal sanctions then, are in some respect necessary, as proof of the moral governor's authority or right to rule.

In the fourth place, conformity and non-conformity to a law or rule of action without sanctions, alike disprove and subvert the moral governor's authority. Conformity to the rule in such a case would exist without a reward, and non-conformity without a penalty. Conformity to the rule takes place, in a case in which there is no proof of the governor's authority. The subject therefore, does not act in conforming to the rule, from respect to his authority, or under the influence of his authority. He conforms to the rule for some other reason, and under some other influence. The fact is undeniable and notorious. It cannot be otherwise. The act of conformity is not only no recognition of the moral governor's authority, but as done, and known to be done exclusively under another influence, it is a distinct declaration, testimony, or proof on the part of the subject, that the moral governor has no authority. He acts just as he would act, for aught that appears to the contrary, were no rule of action prescribed. He thus disclaims all right in the author of the rule to govern him, and gives an open and decided testimony against his authority. Nor is this all. The moral governor, by conferring no reward, acquiesces in this disregard of his authority; for did he promise and confer a reward, there would be no proof from the supposed act of conformity that it was not rendered from respect to his authority, but the contrary. Indeed, it would be impossible in such a case that the subject should conform to the rule and

not be influenced by his authority. The moral governor therefore, by conferring no reward, acquiesces in the subject's disregard of his authority, and so confirms the testimony or proof from the act of the subject. Thus the act of conforming to the rule, contemplated as an unrewarded act, augments the proof, and shows, beyond all doubt or denial, that the author of the rule has no right to reign.

The same thing will appear, still more strikingly, from non-conformity to a rule of action without a penalty. The act of non-conformity or transgression is, in its true nature, an open proclamation by the transgressor, that the character of the governor does not entitle him to the submission claimed in his law. And the proof in this form of testimony or declaration is decisive, provided the governor himself does not counteract it by opposing proof in the execution of penalty. What force or influence can there be or ought there to be, in the mere *dictum* of one—call it law if you will; what force or influence is there or ought there to be, in an expression of his will as *his* will, when there is nothing in his doings and nothing in his character to give it the least weight, or to entitle it to the least respect? Now it is in exactly such a case that the supposed act of transgression, or as we may suppose, a universal revolt, occurs. What is it as an act, and what is it as a testimony? As an act, it is one of open defiance of the moral governor—of absolute contempt of his want of qualification to govern, and a decisive triumph of self-will over incompetence and usurpation. As a testimony, under what aspect does it present the supposed lawgiver except that of an utter disqualification to rule—as had infancy itself ascended the throne and given forth the law? The law and the lawgiver would be, and ought to be, despised. Rebellion would place its foot on his authority, and in a shout of triumph, seal its prostration. Nor is this all. The moral governor by inflicting no penalty, acquiesces in this contempt of himself and of his authority. He refuses to counteract the testimony furnished by the act of transgression to the fact that he has no right to reign. He thus confirms the proof furnished by the act of transgression; and so, the act as unpunished, utterly subverts his authority. Who does not know all this? Who does not know, that rebellion unpunished legalizes rebellion—that it hides from every eye the reality of a perfect moral governor, and covers with

infamy him who pretends to exercise his prerogative; that it annihilates all possible evidence of his authority, and puts all authority in the dust? The proclamation of the rebel is, that the mandate from the throne is unworthy of regard, and the moral governor by his quiescent good wishes, confirms the proclamation, and authorizes rebellion throughout his empire.

(2.) Legal sanctions are necessary to establish the authority of the moral governor, as *the necessary manifestations or proof of his benevolence*. If the relation of a moral governor is any thing, it is a relation distinguished from every other by its peculiar function. This peculiar function as we have seen, is to create and establish the influence of his authority, that by this influence, he may secure obedience to his will as the means of the highest happiness of all, and prevent disobedience to his will as the means of the highest misery of all. The influence of his authority depends on his moral character, on his benevolence, and on the decisive manifestation or proof of his benevolence. He can as we have seen, possess no authority in the view of his subjects, unless it is made evident to them that he is a benevolent being, and feels toward right and wrong moral action on their part as a benevolent being must feel.

The question then is, can he furnish the requisite proof of his benevolence, and of the necessary feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action, and in this way establish his authority, or right to rule, without annexing sanctions to his law?

Here it is readily admitted, that other things beside legal sanctions are or may be necessary, that the moral governor may establish his authority by legal sanctions. Supposing him to evince by the proper proofs, his qualifications in respect to knowledge and power, it may still be necessary to the purpose under consideration, that his deportment in all his other relations beside that of moral governor, should be free from all acts of unkindness or injustice—from every thing which would decisively evince the selfish principle; and also, that it should be characterized by all those positive acts of beneficence which are demanded by his other relations; since otherwise he would furnish decisive evidence against his benevolence, and so against his authority. It may be necessary for the same purpose, that he should prescribe the best rule

of action. His blameless and kind deportment in his other relations may furnish beforehand a degree of presumptive evidence of the character which entitles him to assume the relation of a moral governor. These things, provided the requisite sanctions are annexed to his law, may be said to furnish additional evidence of his authority; because his benevolence and with it his authority, being in this case established by the requisite sanctions, it is reasonable to conclude that what may proceed from benevolence does proceed from benevolence. But it is now maintained, that none of these things, nor all of them together, nor any thing else, can without legal sanctions, prove his benevolence, and so establish his authority. The question of his benevolence, as we have before shown, depends, not on what he does or has done in his other relations, but on what he does in the relation of a moral governor. If he would establish his right to rule, he must act benevolently in this relation as well as in other relations. Benevolence imposes on him a momentous function which is peculiar to this relation, the fulfillment of which is absolutely indispensable as the proof of his benevolence. Whatever his conduct in his other relations may have been or now is, if he fails to fulfill the peculiar and momentous function of his present relation, this failure is decisive proof that he is not a benevolent but a selfish being. Benevolence therefore, requires him to manifest his benevolence by what he does in his relation as a moral governor. It requires him to fulfill the peculiar function of his office, which is, to create and establish the influence of his authority, by manifesting in his present relation his benevolence in its necessary feelings toward right and wrong moral action. If he would create and establish the influence of his authority, he must act the part of benevolence in his present relation; and if he would act the part of benevolence in his present relation, he must manifest the necessary feelings of benevolence toward the best and the worst kind of action on the part of his subjects, by what he does in his present relation. All that there is in the nature of benevolence which gives him the right to rule, or on which this right does or can depend in the view of his subjects, is, that it necessarily involves certain peculiar feelings toward right and wrong moral action, and that it does and will make a full manifestation of them in the moral governor, for the purpose of securing the

one kind of action as the means of the highest happiness of all, and of preventing the other as the means of the highest misery of all. If then the moral governor does not in his relation as a moral governor, make a full and decisive manifestation of these feelings of benevolence, he cannot prove his benevolence, cannot fulfill the grand and peculiar function of his office, and of course cannot establish his authority.

To recur then to the question now before us; can the moral governor in his present relation manifest in any way, the necessary feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action, and so establish his authority without legal sanctions?

Can he do this by mere professions of the supposed feelings? Such professions may be made by the most insincere and false pretender to benevolence, or rather, would be made in most cases, by the veriest usurper and tyrant. Who that ever claimed the right of dominion over others, did not profess to aim at the general good, and to require submission to his will only to promote this high end? I do not say that such professions are necessarily inconsistent with benevolence; but I say, that in themselves they are utterly insufficient as proof of benevolence: while the want of all proof from every other source, would, notwithstanding such professions, be decisive proof to the contrary. Mere professions of a principle of action in cases in which if it exist, it will show itself in action, and in which it does not thus show itself, are ever and justly regarded as insincere and false. To say in such a case to a sufferer, (depart in peace, be warmed, be filled,) and yet to give nothing, is proof decisive of the want of the benevolent principle. So in the case before us. If there are acts which the moral governor may perform which would fully prove his benevolence, and which therefore he would perform were he truly benevolent, then no possible reason can be conceived for his failure to show himself benevolent by the requisite acts, except that he does not possess the character. Who would concede the right to govern to such a mere pretender to benevolence?

Again; there are strictly speaking but three acts which a being in the capacity or relation of a perfect moral governor can perform, viz., the act of prescribing the best rule of action; the act of annexing the requisite sanctions to the rule; and the act of executing these sanctions in cases of obedience and disobedience. These acts may be viewed as comprising all that

he does or can do in performing the function of this high relation. In assuming this relation, he cannot reward obedience nor punish disobedience; for neither obedience nor disobedience can exist. The question then now before us is reduced to this: can he manifest the necessary feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action by *merely* prescribing the best rule of action. We have already said enough to show that such a rule of action without sanctions, not only could not be an authoritative rule of action, but could not possess other essential characteristics of the law of a perfect moral government; that it would be the mere advice of imbecility; that it could not be regarded as the truthful expression of any benevolent feeling whatever on the part of him who should give it, but would amount to an open, palpable disclaimer of all authority. I do not say, that the act of giving the best rule of action is not necessary, that the moral governor may by legal sanctions manifest or prove his benevolence. But I affirm, that the act itself without legal sanctions, is not proof of his benevolence. He does nothing in this case which a perfectly selfish being may not be believed to do. He does nothing to show that he feels toward right and wrong moral action, as a benevolent being must feel; nothing to show that he truly prefers the best kind of action to the worst, or the highest happiness of all to the highest misery of all; nothing to show that he will befriend and bless the obedient rather than the disobedient, or that he will not confer good on the latter, and inflict evil on the former to the extent of his power. He commits himself in no respect as the friend and patron of right moral action, nor as the enemy and avenger of wrong moral action. He refuses to do it when benevolence requires him to do it, and when were he a benevolent being, he would do it. He therefore proves himself not to be benevolent.

Again; if the manifestation of these feelings of the moral governor be made at all, it must be made by some act or acts, which are the appropriate and significant expressions of them, by some act or acts which shall be justly and universally regarded as such expressions of them. We have already seen, that by promising natural good to obedience, and threatening natural evil to disobedience in some supposable degrees, the moral governor in a case in which there is no evidence to the contrary, would decisively and in the most impressive man-

ner conceivable, express the necessary feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action, and so establish his authority. Such sanctions as we have spoken of, would be decisive evidence of these feelings, because they furnish the best evidence of them of which the nature of the case admits. I now say, that legal sanctions are the necessary evidence of these feelings on the part of the moral governor. What then is—what can be, truly or justly regarded as the decisive, unambiguous expression of his feelings of approbation of obedience and his disapprobation of disobedience, except either, when giving his law, the promise to reward obedience and the threatening to punish disobedience; or the actual conferring of a reward for obedience when it exists, and the actual inflicting of a penalty for disobedience when it exists. In giving his law, he cannot reward obedience nor punish disobedience, for there can be no obedience to be rewarded nor disobedience to be punished. If then he does not promise to reward the one, and threaten to punish the other, he does nothing and can do nothing, to manifest the necessary feelings toward the two kinds of action, nothing to show that it is not a matter of perfect indifference to him whether his subjects obey or disobey his law. By annexing no sanctions to his law, he furnishes decisive proof that he wills no consequences in good or evil, no results in happiness or misery to his subjects as obedient or disobedient, and of course, that he is not willing to use the least influence in the form of motive, nor any influence arising from the expression of his approbation or disapprobation clearly and fully made, for the purpose of securing right and preventing wrong moral action, and thus securing the highest happiness of all, and preventing the highest misery of all. As a moral governor then, in such a case he can manifest no feelings, and of course no character, which entitles him to the least respectful consideration from his subjects. Whatever may be his claims or his professions or both, there can be no influence from his character to secure the one kind of moral action nor to prevent the other—none from his official prerogative or right to rule—none which would not result from the character of any other, even the most selfish being, who should make the same claims and the same professions—none in a word, to secure obedience and prevent disobedience to his will, because it is the will and *proved* to be the will of a perfect being.

Were obedience to exist, he would make no manifestation of such a will by conferring a reward. Were disobedience to exist, he would manifest no such will by inflicting a legal penalty. What then, shall be said of his moral character? Where in the view of his subjects is the proof of his benevolence? What becomes of the peculiar function of his office? He utterly refuses to do the very things, which his high relation as a moral governor, benevolence requires him to do, viz., to manifest his benevolence as a practical principle in its necessary forms of approbation of right and disapprobation of wrong moral action. He utterly neglects to establish his right to rule. He refuses to bring that influence to bear on his subjects, which is indispensable to secure the highest happiness of all, and to prevent the highest misery of all—the influence of his authority. Instead therefore, of manifesting his benevolence in its appropriate and necessary expressions, and so performing the peculiar function of his office by bringing this highest and best influence to control the moral conduct of his subjects, he betrays a character which entitles him only to execration, as a false and faithless protector of his kingdom's welfare. Legal sanctions then are necessary to evince the benevolence of a moral governor, and so to establish his authority.

Further; the same thing will appear if we examine some of the particular ways or modes in which it may be supposed that a moral governor may evince his benevolence, and so establish his authority without legal sanctions.—*Vide* LECT. VII., p. 128. It may be said or supposed, that a greater amount of obedience to the best rule of action might or would be secured, and with it a greater amount of happiness without legal sanctions than with them, and that in this way the benevolence of the moral governor and his consequent right to rule may be fully established. I answer, that by obedience in this case cannot be meant conformity to the rule involving submission to authority; for according to the supposition, the so-called obedience must exist as the proof of the governor's benevolence, and in this way as the proof of his authority. There can therefore be no manifestation of his character as the ground of his authority prior to the supposed obedience, and of course no obedience involving submission to his authority. On the contrary, he who should give the supposed rule of action, would as we have seen, instead of manifesting the character,

the manifestation of which is requisite to his authority, manifest the opposite character, and so disprove and subvert his authority. By obedience then in the present case, must be meant mere conformity to the rule of action, or right moral action performed solely under the influence of the perceived nature and tendencies of moral action, without involving the least submission to, or respect for, authority. But to say that there might be a greater amount of right moral action without than with legal sanctions, is saying nothing to the purpose, since it may as well be said that there might not be. To say either, is merely to assert a natural possibility of things—a possibility which must always be admitted in cases of moral reasoning. The question is one of probability. And the probability of a greater amount of right moral action is greater, other things being the same, under a greater degree of influence to secure it, than under a less degree of such influence; while the degree of this influence is greater with legal sanctions than without them. Besides, our object in the present inquiry is not to determine the comparative excellence of different systems of influence. It is, to ascertain what is the nature of a perfect moral government under the general or universal admission, that there is such a thing administered by an infinitely perfect being over his moral creation, and that whatever else it is, it is the necessary means of the greatest amount of right moral action and of happiness. We have said enough already, to show that without legal sanctions there cannot be a perfect moral government. To say then, that a greater amount of right moral action might be secured without legal sanctions than with them, is to say that such a result might be secured without a perfect moral government; that is, that the result might be secured without the necessary means of securing it; which is absurd. Thus if we view the present question as one of mere probability, all the probability in the case is, that there would be a greater amount of right moral action with legal sanctions than without them; while the fact that there would be, is fully admitted in the concession that a perfect moral government is necessary to the greatest amount of right moral action. But there is yet another view of this important topic which demands consideration. If then it be conceded that a greater amount of right moral action and of happiness would take place under the supposed system, and

that its adoption would therefore be demanded by benevolence, still the benevolence of the being who should adopt it, could never be proved. It has already been shown, that neither his deportment prior to his assuming the relation of a moral governor, nor the act of prescribing the best rule of action, could be regarded as proof of his benevolence. Nor could the least degree of proof on this point be furnished by any degree of right moral action and of happiness supposable in the case. As I have already said, right moral action in such a case, must be performed solely under the influence of the perceived nature and tendencies of moral action. It cannot therefore be performed out of respect for the character of the lawgiver, and of course can furnish no testimony or proof of its excellence. There can be no connection between the right moral action and the character of the lawgiver. The former therefore can furnish no proof of the excellence of the latter. The amount of happiness consequent on such action can in no degree depend on the will of the lawgiver; for to suppose this, would be to suppose a legal reward in a case in which there is no legal reward. No possible proof then exists or can exist in the case supposed, that he who assumes the relation of a moral governor, feels toward right and wrong moral action, as a benevolent being must feel. Were he a perfectly selfish being, it is altogether credible that he should do all that he is supposed to do. Nor is this all. But by failing to show in his relation of a moral governor, the feelings of a benevolent being toward right and wrong moral action, he proves himself to be a selfish being. If then he is, according to the present supposition a benevolent being, he is benevolent in a case in which his benevolence cannot be proved, in which he acts contrary to the plainest dictates of benevolence, and in which therefore, according to the laws of evidence, he must be regarded as a selfish being. In such a case, there could of course be no authority; nothing which could be called a moral government. I do not say that a benevolent being would not adopt the supposed system, if the greatest good required its adoption; nor that it would not be one kind of a *moral system*. But I say that it would not be a *perfect moral government*. Its influence would be simply that of the perceived nature and tendencies of moral action; and nothing more and nothing less than were there no lawgiver supposed

in the case. There could not be the shadow of that influence which results from the law, the authority and the character of a perfect moral governor. He who should assume the supposed relation without annexing sanctions to his law, would have, and would be entitled to have, no more and no other influence over the conduct of his subjects, than any individual among them who should propound the same rule of action. The great object and end of the relation is to secure the highest well-being of all, and to prevent the highest misery of all, by securing right and preventing wrong moral action; and the great and peculiar function of the relation is, to secure right moral action, and to prevent wrong moral action by the influence of his authority—an influence which depends on the manifestation of that approbation of the one kind of action, and of that disapprobation of the other, which a benevolent being must feel. But without legal sanctions he manifests no such feelings, and thus proves himself to be a selfish being and destitute of all authority.

Again; it may be said, that a moral governor by promising a reward to obedience, though he threatens no penalty to disobedience, would prove his benevolence and so establish his authority. I answer, that the thing supposed is impossible. For how could the promise of a reward to obedience prove the benevolence of the lawgiver, while he left disobedience to go unpunished? How could he show himself to feel as a benevolent being must feel toward right moral action, without also showing himself to feel as a benevolent being must feel toward wrong moral action? All the proof of such feeling toward right moral action furnished by the reward, would be wholly counteracted by manifesting no appropriate feeling toward wrong moral action; or rather, to manifest no disapprobation of wrong moral action, would be to show indifference or approbation in respect to it; and no being who feels either indifference to or approbation of wrong moral action, can feel as a benevolent being must feel toward either right or wrong moral action. But not to dwell longer on this topic. Make what supposition you will, if the moral governor confers no reward for obedience, he expresses no approbation of the only means of the best end, but rather disapprobation; and if he inflicts no penalty for disobedience, he expresses no disapprobation of the means of the worst end, but rather approbation.

In the one case, he virtually punishes obedience by withholding a reward; in the other, he virtually rewards disobedience by withholding penalty. Suppose then what else we may, if, in the capacity of moral governor, he does not annex sanctions to his law, and if he does not reward obedience and punish disobedience, his conduct must be traced to the selfish principle in some form. It may be selfishness in the form of caprice, despotic humor, favoritism, a spirit of self-aggrandizement, the love of applause, or of a weak, indulgent tenderness which sacrifices public good to individual happiness. But it is selfishness still, and not benevolence; for benevolence in a moral governor must feel, and must express, approbation of obedience and disapprobation of disobedience to the best law. Not to express these feelings, is not to show the necessary and due regard to the only means of the highest happiness of all, and the necessary and due abhorrence of the sure means of the highest misery of all. Not to do it, is to establish the fact that the moral governor is not himself governed by the principle of perfect and immutable rectitude. Whom he will reward, and whom he will punish, however it may be supposed to be decided by other considerations, is not determined by the perfection of his character. So far as this basis for confidence is concerned, the good have as much to fear as the bad, and the bad as much to hope for as the good. Perfection in character is wanting in him who occupies the throne. Obedience, as submission to authority—as that confidential homage and unqualified and joyous compliance in which the will of the subject goes along with the will of a perfect ruler of all, is impossible. There is no such ruler. The act of obedience, and the act of disobedience, alike in their true tendency and influence, disclaim and prostrate his authority, and the moral governor, doing nothing to counteract the effect, legalizes rebellion from one end of his dominions to the other.

R E M A R K .

We see why the attempts to prove the benevolence of God from the light of nature have been so often, not to say uniformly, unsuccessful. The fact I think will not be denied, that the arguments of the soundest theism on this most interesting and momentous question have been, and still are, in the

view of many of the most acute and ingenuous minds, marred by manifest imperfection and weakness. Even many Christian divines confidently maintain that the moral perfection of God cannot be proved from the light of nature. My present design is not to trace minutely the defects of the arguments now referred to, but rather to present what I deem a fundamental defect common to them all, and which fully accounts for their inconclusive and unsatisfactory character, viz., that in these arguments *the most important relation of God to his moral creation has been wholly overlooked in its true and proper bearing on the conclusion.* And here let me not be misunderstood. I do not say that this important relation of God has been denied. It has been fully believed by every sound theist. But I affirm that, in the best conducted arguments on the subject with which I am acquainted, that no such account has been made of the relation of God as the moral governor of men as the exigency of the argument demands. If what has been said in the present lecture be just, the question, whether a being who assumes the relation of a moral governor is benevolent, depends on another, viz., whether the sanctions of his law manifest his benevolence in its necessary approbation of right, and necessary disapprobation of wrong moral action. But in what treatise or work in natural theology has the argument for the divine benevolence been made to depend on the relation of God to men as their moral governor—on the nature, principles and facts of this relation, and particularly on the sanctions annexed to his law? On the contrary, is not the uniform method of discussing the great question of God's moral character from the light of nature, after having proved his existence as Creator, and his natural attributes, to proceed directly to the proof of his moral attributes—that is, to the proof of his benevolence—without the least attempt to unfold the nature of his high relation to his creatures as their perfect moral governor? But if God sustains this relation to men—and surely no sound theist will deny it—then manifestly it is the great, the paramount relation which he sustains to them—a relation to which every other must be subservient, even that of their Creator, and that of the providential Disposer of all events in respect to them. This relation of God to his creatures must therefore control and modify all the manifestations of himself to them, and especially the manifestations of

his moral character. How can we judge of the moral character of any being except from his works, his acts, and his doings, their nature, design, tendencies and results? And how can we judge of these without understanding and contemplating the relation which the being sustains to other beings whom his acts and doings respect? Suppose you were to witness a parent inflicting chastisement upon his child in some of its necessary and severer forms, and yet were so ignorant of the parental relation as not to be able to comprehend, or so thoughtless as not to consider, the design of parental discipline; or suppose you were to see a surgeon amputating the limb of a patient, without a suspicion or a thought of the necessity of the operation to save the life of the latter; or to see the executioner of public justice inflicting the penalty of the law upon the murderer, wholly ignorant or making no account of the design of such infliction—how, in either case, could you regard the evil suffered as the dictate and proof of benevolence, or as other than the decisive proof of the opposite principle? So, if God is acting in the relation of a perfect moral governor of his moral creation, and if all his acts and doings are controlled and modified by this relation, to what purpose, without appealing to this relation and to his acts and doings as dictated and modified by it, shall we attempt to prove his benevolence, or to judge for ourselves, or to lead others to judge of his moral character? On this supposition no wonder that all such attempts are vain. If we would vindicate the ways of God to man, we must understand, and lead others to understand, his relation to man as a moral governor. To represent him as merely the Creator of men, and the providential Disposer of their allotments, and in these relations aiming only to produce the happiness and to prevent the misery of his creatures irrespective of their moral conduct, when he is acting in the paramount relation of their lawgiver, and adhering to every principle of strictest equity in his administration, is to pour darkness on all his works and ways, and therefore on his moral character; while to contemplate him in his true relation—the high and august relation of a perfect moral governor—would light up all the dark paths of his providence, and cause all his goodness to pass before us.

That God is in fact administering a perfect moral government over this world, will be readily conceded by every be-

liever in divine revelation. It is true indeed that there is no ground for the pretense that he carries this system of government out to its full issues in the present life. Still it must be admitted by all who receive the Christian revelation, that God in his providence over men in this world, in no respect departs from or violates a single principle of a perfect moral government; but that on the contrary, he so adheres to every such principle in his administration, that its perfection can in no respect be impeached or denied. Why then is it incredible that his providence, were it rightly read in the lessons which it gives us, should show us that he is administering a perfect moral government over this world, if not in the form of a strictly legal economy with some delay of its just retributions not inconsistent with its nature, at least in what, as we think, is far more probable—in the form of an economy of grace? If the word of God reveals him to us as our moral governor, exercising his rightful dominion through grace, why should it be thought strange that his works and ways of providence, well considered, should present him in the same exalted and glorious relation? Or rather, how can it be supposed to be otherwise? Can it be supposed, that in his works and ways of providence he contradicts the testimony concerning himself given in his word? Does his written revelation exhibit him to our faith in one relation, and his acts and doings in another? Is it credible, that his works when duly considered, should make no decisive manifestation of the character and the relation which he sustains to his intelligent creation? What shall be concluded, if his works furnish no confirmation of his declarations? What is this but contradicting in his word what he is doing in his providence? If the book of revelation reveals God administering over men a perfect moral government blended with an economy of grace, the book of nature—the book that tells us *what he is by what he does*—if rightly read, must show him as the righteous Sovereign, and as the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

## LECTURE VII.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority *through the medium of law*.—The nature of the law further unfolded.—7. The law of a perfect Moral Government involves *sanctions*.—8th. The *necessity* of legal sanctions shown.—(8.) because they are the necessary proofs of his benevolence in the forms of his highest approbation of obedience and highest disapprobation of disobedience.—This is argued; first, from the insufficiency of another mode of proving his benevolence; second, from the nature of legal sanctions as already explained; third, from the view of the sanctions of the supreme law of the state.—REMARKS: 1. Christianity is not a selfish system of religion; 2. What it is to make light of the divine threatenings; 3. They who deny the view now given of the sanctions of a perfect Moral Government, cannot prove the benevolence of God.

IN treating of the necessity of legal sanctions in the preceding lecture, I attempted to show, (1.) That they are necessary, in some respect or under some relation, as the proof of the moral governor's authority; and (2.) That they are necessary for this purpose, as being the requisite proof of his benevolence.

I now proceed to show, as I proposed—

(3.) That legal sanctions are necessary for this purpose, as the required manifestations or proofs of his benevolence *in the form of his highest approbation of obedience, and of his highest disapprobation of disobedience*.

It has been shown that the moral governor is under the necessity of establishing by decisive proof, his authority, or right to reign; that he cannot do this without proving his benevolence, and that he cannot prove his benevolence and so establish his authority, by any thing which he can do in his other relations, nor by any thing which he can do in this relation, without annexing natural good and evil to his law as its sanctions. What I now propose to show is, that he cannot prove his benevolence, without annexing sanctions to his law which shall manifest his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience; in other words, *that natural good and evil cannot become legal sanctions—that is, cannot manifest the benevolence, and so establish the authority of the moral governor, in any other way or mode, except by manifesting his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience*.

I argue the truth of this proposition,

In the first place, from the insufficiency of certain particular ways or modes in which natural good and evil are, or have been supposed to become legal sanctions, other than that now specified. Here I propose to examine such other modes than the one now specified, some one of which so far as I know, has been considered the proper mode. If natural good and evil cannot become legal sanctions in any of these modes, it is fairly inferred that they cannot in any other than that now maintained. I remark then,

That natural good promised or conferred as the mere dictate of individual kindness, cannot possess the nature of a legal reward; and that natural evil, threatened or inflicted as the mere dictate of individual unkindness, cannot possess the nature of a legal penalty. In such a case, the lawgiver in annexing the supposed sanctions to his law, and also in their execution, can have no benevolent regard for the public good, and of course no such regard for the establishment of his own authority as the necessary means of the public good. His whole object in conferring the natural good, and in inflicting the natural evil supposed, terminates in the happiness and unhappiness of individuals as such, and in his own selfish gratification. This implies an utter disregard of the highest happiness of all, and of the necessary means of this end. It shows him to be utterly regardless of the function of his high relation, and recreant to his high trust. Whatever other tendencies then his acts may be supposed to have, or whatever results they may be supposed to produce, they can have no tendency to establish his authority, and to secure by means of it the highest well-being of his kingdom. On the contrary, the supposed acts must be—the one in the form of favoritism or indulgent tenderness, and the other in that of resentment or revenge, the dictate of unqualified selfishness, and must therefore decisively disprove his authority.

Nor do natural good and evil employed merely as moral discipline, constitute legal sanctions. It is altogether credible, that a being perfectly benevolent should, prior to assuming the relation of the moral governor of other beings, confer on them much natural good, and inflict some natural evil, for the purpose of securing better results, when they come to act under his moral government, than he could otherwise secure. Such

natural good and evil however, cannot constitute legal sanctions. It is also credible, if we suppose a legal economy to be connected, as it may be, with an economy of grace, that natural good and evil should be employed to reform the transgressors of law. Such natural good and evil however, being merely disciplinary in their design and tendency, cannot constitute legal sanctions. I admit indeed that natural evil inflicted for the purpose of reclaiming an offender, is often called *punishment* in the popular use of the word. Hence such natural evil is often mistaken for *penal* evil, or for *the penalty of the law*. Such natural evil, as distinguished from legal penalty, is properly called *chastisement*. It implies not less than the legal penalty, that the subject is an offender, since otherwise its infliction for the purpose of reformation would be obviously absurd. It differs however essentially, under a perfect moral government, from the legal penalty. Chastisement aims exclusively at the reformation of the subject; legal penalty not at all. Chastisement is inflicted in love; legal penalty, in wrath. Chastisement, in its design and tendency, is a blessing to its subject; legal penalty, an unmitigated curse. Chastisement has a special respect to the individual's benefit; legal penalty respects the good of the public. Hence chastisement cannot, under a perfect moral government, be the penalty of the law, it being a ridiculous anomaly to threaten a transgressor of law with the means of his reformation and of his deliverance from the legal penalty; in other words, to threaten a real, and to him the greatest blessing, as a legal penalty.

Nor is the conferring of a legal reward by the moral governor, the payment of a debt, in the sense of that which is due for something received, which is not due. The lawgiver receives nothing in the obedience of his subjects but what is his due. Obedience is a matter of obligation on their part, and of rightful demand on his; and surely he does not reward them for paying their own debt. By this I do not mean that the reward is not that which is due, at least on account of the relation which conferring it has to the public good, as one means of increasing the public good, and that it may not in this sense be properly said that the reward is reckoned of debt *κατὰ τὸ ὀφλημα*. This however cannot imply that the service claimed or rendered is not due to the lawgiver, and that the reward establishes the authority of the lawgiver simply by

satisfying the claim of the obedient subject. Indeed, the act of satisfying the claim of the subject, be the ground of it what it may, may be prompted by selfishness as well as by benevolence, and can therefore furnish no proof of benevolence, and none of authority on the part of the lawgiver. Besides, on the supposition opposed, the lawgiver's authority could not be established, until obedience should exist and the reward be conferred. Of course, in the supposed act of obedience there could be no recognition of authority. In short, if the promise and the conferring of a reward for obedience has no relation except to satisfy a claim of the subject, then it has no relation to the public good. It does not imply the least degree of approbation of obedience as the means of the public good, and instead of being proof of the lawgiver's benevolence, and so of his authority, it is proof to the contrary.

Nor is the endurance of natural evil as a legal penalty the payment of a debt on the part of the transgressor, by which he satisfies the claim of the lawgiver, and thus establishes his authority. For what has the subject received for which he owes suffering as an equivalent? Plainly, he cannot, in this sense, be said to owe suffering as a debt.\* He has neither done nor failed to do any thing for which suffering on his part can be rendering an equivalent. The language of a benevolent lawgiver is not, "I will be as well pleased and satisfied with disobedience and the endurance of its penalty, as with perfect obedience." Legal penalty is not a thing claimed by the lawgiver and rendered by the transgressor, but a thing threatened and inflicted by the lawgiver, and endured by the transgressor. Considered simply as so much suffering endured, it can have no tendency to manifest the benevolence of the lawgiver. Nor can it have such tendency except it be considered as suffering inflicted by the act of the lawgiver, and as such, becoming an expression of the emotion which benevolence must feel toward transgression. Voluntary submission to it on the part of the subject, is in no respect necessary to it as a legal penalty. Its infliction is the act of the moral governor, and in no respect the act of the transgressor, by which

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\* Sin, as an act of withholding obedience which is due, may be called a debt, as in *MATT. vi. : 12*; not however as something due which can be paid by suffering the legal penalty, nor by any thing else.

he may satisfy any demand made on him by the lawgiver, and thus establish his authority.

Nor do natural good and evil become legal sanctions, as being so much motive to secure right and prevent wrong moral action. By this I do not mean, that natural good and evil as the matter of legal sanctions, must not have the influence of motives on the minds of subjects, that they may answer the end of legal sanctions. Nor do I mean that the direct influence of natural good and evil as motives, is at all inconsistent with that peculiar influence which we call moral government, so that the two influences may not coexist. But I mean, that the influence of natural good and evil as such, or as so much motive merely, does not constitute them legal sanctions. In such influence merely, there is no influence of authority. The former may exist without the latter. If we suppose the subject to be under the influence of natural good and evil, as so much motive merely, he is not under the influence of authority, and therefore not under the influence of moral government. If we suppose him to conform to the rule of action under the former influence merely, the act would not be done because the moral governor commands it, but done simply to obtain natural good and to avoid natural evil; and of course done without the least regard to the will or character of him who prescribes the rule. Now the object of a perfect moral governor is not merely to secure right moral action, but to secure it in a given way by a peculiar influence—the influence of his authority; to secure it, I do not say exclusively, but really by this influence. It is to bring his subject to act from a respect to his will, as the will of a perfect being. Otherwise the act of conformity to the rule would not be an act of obedience, as involving any recognition of his right to rule. Even supposing the act to be morally right—an act done in view of the true nature and tendency of moral action, still if done from this influence merely, it would no more involve any regard for the character of the lawgiver, as that which gives him the right to rule, than were the subject hired to perform the act by a fellow subject. Natural good and evil then, influencing the subject as merely so much motive, are not legal sanctions.

Nor do natural good and evil become legal sanctions, on the ground that it is right or just to reward obedience and to punish disobedience, irrespective of the tendency of so doing

to produce happiness and to prevent misery. The contrary opinion is maintained by some at least in respect to penalty. It is said that it is right to punish the transgressor of law irrespective of the general good—that it is ill-desert, and not the good of society, which is the ground of his just liability to punishment—that sin or transgression is an evil in itself and deserves punishment for its own sake, and without respect to its tendency to evil. Now in such statements as these, it is obvious that distinctions are made without a difference. It is readily admitted, then, that it is right to punish the transgressor of law; that it is ill-desert, which is the ground of his just liability to punishment, and that sin or transgression is an evil in itself. But it is denied that these things are true, or can be conceived to be true, irrespective of the relation of punishment to some good end, or to the public good. The real and only question in the case then is, would it be right or just to punish the transgressor of law, if no good end could be promoted by his punishment? Or thus, would it be right or just to inflict suffering in a case in which not the least good in kind or degree could result, either to the sufferer or to any other being from its infliction? To say that it would be, is to say that it would be right or just to inflict suffering purely *for its own sake*. Could a being of perfect benevolence do this? Could any feeling short of unqualified malice prompt it? Would such an act sustain the authority of the moral governor? But it will be said that there is inherent ill-desert in the transgression of a perfect law, and that on this account it is right or just to inflict punishment on the transgressor. But the ill-desert of transgression is either its relation to the law as tending to destroy its authority or the authority of the lawgiver and so to destroy the public good which depends on the authority of law, or it is not. If it is, and if punishment, is justly inflicted on this account and as the means of sustaining this authority, then it is inflicted in respect to a good end, even for the public good. If it is not, then plainly the transgression of law sustains no relation to law, on account of which it is right or just to punish it. It leaves the authority of the law or of the lawgiver unimpaired and in full force. It has done, and can do no injury to the law or to the authority of the lawgiver. There is no evil to be prevented or to be redressed by punishment, no good to be accomplished in respect to the law. Why then punish the

transgressor? Is it said that the ill-desert of transgression is not its relation to law as tending to destroy its authority, but its inherent moral turpitude considered simply as wrong moral action? Be it so; but how can this be a good reason for inflicting suffering on the transgressor merely for its own sake, or when no good end can be answered by its infliction? Is it said that it is fit, or proper, or right, or what ought to be done, and that we instinctively feel it to be so? But why is it? Right to inflict suffering purely for the sake of inflicting it! Who are the beings that *instinctively feel* this to be right, and in what world do they dwell? Of such a species of beings we have no knowledge, and with them if they exist, we utterly disclaim all fraternity. Is it then said that transgression is evil in itself, and that on this account and for its own sake, it deserves punishment? This is only saying in another form the same thing. What then is the meaning of the language? There are, generally speaking, two things, and only two, each of which may be properly said to be *evil in itself*. The one is *suffering*, including unhappiness and misery, and the other is the *direct means* of suffering. Each is truly and properly said to be *evil in itself*, in distinction from being evil as the *indirect* means of suffering. That suffering, *i. e.* unhappiness, pain, or misery, is *evil in itself* will not be denied. So that which is the *direct means* of suffering or of unhappiness, is properly said to be *evil in itself*, though it be also the *indirect* means of it. Thus it is properly said, that ignorance or infamy is evil in itself. But neither of these things is *evil in itself* in the same sense in which unhappiness or suffering is. The transgression of a perfect law, sin, wrong moral action, is also *evil in itself*, not as being itself *suffering*, but as being in its own nature and true tendency, the *direct means* of suffering. This is all that can be properly meant by calling transgression or sin *evil in itself*. Not being identical with suffering or unhappiness, it can be conceived to be *evil*, only as being in its own nature the *direct* means of suffering. But how can this fact be a good and sufficient reason for inflicting suffering on the transgressor by a moral governor, when no good can result from the infliction? It would be only to increase evil for evil's sake. And we say again, that nothing short of unqualified malice could inflict suffering in such a case. Or rather, we affirm that the most unqualified malice could not do it. The supposed act is

impossible in the nature of things. No being can find a motive to inflict suffering on others any more than on himself, when no good *in his view* either to himself, or to them, or to others, is connected with or depends on the act. The supposition involves the absurdity of choosing to act without a motive or a reason—the absurdity of an event without a reason. The supposed act bids defiance to even infernal malice. But it has been said, if the justice of punishment is founded in the utility of punishment, then it will follow, that if the public good would be best promoted by punishing the innocent instead of the transgressor, it would be right and just to punish the innocent, which is revolting to every sentiment of our moral nature. It is readily admitted, that to punish the innocent instead of the guilty, would, as things are in their essential nature and relations, be abhorrent to every true sentiment of right and equity. But here two questions arise; why is it thus, and how would it be, were the nature and relations of things changed in the manner supposed? Why is it thus? Is it not because the truth is clearly seen and strongly felt by every mind, that the authority of law, and with it the public good depend on and require the punishment of the transgressor, and forbid the punishment of the obedient subject? Does not every one know, even the culprit at the bar, as well as the judge on the bench, that to assert, that a due regard to the authority of law and with it to the public good require the punishment of the transgressor, is the same thing as to assert that justice requires his punishment? And now, if we suppose the essential nature of things to be so changed, that the authority of law and the public good as depending on it, would be destroyed, and absolute and universal misery follow, unless the innocent were to be punished, would it not be right to make innocence, now become the true and necessary cause of such fearful results, the ground of punishment? Could a benevolent moral governor voluntarily become the author of such utter ruin and wretchedness, by suffering the innocent to escape punishment? Plainly on the supposition now made, the nature of things would be so changed, that innocence, obedience to law, would possess the same nature, and sustain the same relations as the ground of punishment, which disobedience now sustains; and if our moral nature approve of the punishment of the latter, it must in the case supposed, approve of the punishment of the former. If it is

now right or just to punish the disobedient, it would then be so to punish the obedient—to punish for a thing having the same relative nature, though it should have another name. To deny it, is to make a supposition to be reasoned on, and then to disregard and overlook it in the reasoning. It is like supposing the nature of things to be so changed that two and two should be five, and then to deny that on this supposition two and two would be five, or that twice two and two would be ten. Those philosophers then, who maintain the justice of punishment, irrespective of its relations to the public good or to any good—and the same thing is true *mutatis mutandis*—in respect to the justice of reward, evidently fail to analyze their own necessary ideas or conceptions of things. If the question be put, why is it right to punish transgression, they have no answer to give, but that it is right, or that it is right because it is right, or some equivalent answer equally trivial and irrelevant. If pressed further on the point, they tell us, that the idea of moral rectitude or rightness is a simple idea—an idea incapable of analysis and definition, and that the question is wholly unauthorized, why is an action morally right, or what is that in which its moral rectitude consists. This has already been considered.

Nor do natural good and evil become legal sanctions, considered as the dictate of justice as distinguished from benevolence; or, as annexed to law, apart from their subserviency to public good. This view of the subject, which is not perhaps essentially different from that just considered, instead of representing benevolence as the primary attribute, and justice as one particular form of benevolence, represents them “as distinct and primary characteristics” or attributes of a perfect moral governor.\* Its advocates are obviously led to adopt it, from an inadequate and false conception of the nature of benevolence, as the comprehensive moral perfection of a perfect ruler. By benevolence, they obviously mean that species of sentimental kindness which seeks the welfare of others as individuals, without regard to the highest well-being of the whole. Such kindness is not the benevolence of a perfect moral governor. It not only does not involve or imply the attribute of justice, but would be palpably inconsistent with it. Benevo-

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\* CHALMERS' NATURAL THEOLOGY, Vol. II, c. vi.

lence, as the attribute of a perfect moral governor, is the supreme love of the highest happiness of his kingdom, or an elective preference of this object to every other that can come into competition with it as an object of preference. It becomes therefore, from its very nature in relation to the promotion of the highest happiness, a *disposition or purpose* to promote it, by every means necessary for its promotion. One of these is, the establishment and support of the authority of a perfect law, or of the lawgiver's authority, by legal sanctions. Benevolence dictates and demands this, and in its very nature necessarily leads to a full and fixed determination or purpose to secure and employ this means of the general good, or highest well-being of all; and as such a purpose is what we mean, and all that can be meant, by *justice* as the attribute of a perfect moral governor—call it by what name we will—*righteousness, holiness, justice*—it is a disposition or purpose, prompted by benevolence, to uphold the authority of the law, or of the lawgiver, by legal sanctions as the necessary means of the general good. It is therefore one particular form or modification of benevolence, or a particular disposition or purpose, prompted by benevolence. Indeed, all we call moral attributes in a perfect moral being, except benevolence, are only forms or modifications of benevolence in more particular dispositions or purposes. Thus veracity is a particular disposition or purpose, prompted by his benevolence, to speak truth; pity, or compassion, is a particular disposition or purpose prompted by benevolence, to relieve suffering; mercy, as an attribute of a moral ruler, is a particular disposition or purpose, prompted by benevolence, to show favor to the guilty. *Justice* also, as the attribute of a moral ruler, is a particular disposition or purpose prompted by benevolence, to establish and maintain the authority of law by legal sanctions, which, under a merely legal system, is in all cases indispensable to the general good. It is true that general benevolence dictates and requires other things also, for other things are necessary to the general good. But it demands the support of the authority of the moral governor as one necessary, absolutely indispensable means of this end. Thus viewed as a benevolent disposition to uphold his authority, as the indispensable means of the general good, it constitutes, or rather assumes the particular form, which we call *justice*, as an attribute of a moral governor. Hence benevo-

lence, as the attribute of a perfect moral governor, never requires any thing which is inconsistent with what justice in a perfect moral governor dictates and demands; for the support of the authority of law is always as truly exacted by benevolence as by justice. Nor does justice ever require any thing inconsistent with benevolence; for the support of the authority of law by the requisite means of its support, is what justice demands, and this is always necessary to the general good, and therefore always dictated and demanded by benevolence. Benevolence, no less than justice requires, under a perfect moral government viewed as a merely legal system, the sacrifice of individual happiness in the case of the transgressor; so that justice in seeking his punishment, never claims what benevolence forbids. What justice demands in such a case, benevolence also demands. So if benevolence dictates and demands an atonement, which shall fully support the authority of law in the pardon of the transgressor, it claims nothing which justice as the attribute of a moral governor forbids.\* The entire claim of justice is met, provided the authority of law be supported in case of transgression, whether this be done by the execution of penalty or by an atonement. There is therefore no antagonism here—no clashing of different attributes in the moral governor—no violence done to benevolence, in answering the inflexible demand of justice; and none to the inflexible demand of justice, by conforming to any conceivable demand of benevolence. Justice, and all the particular moral attributes of a perfect moral governor, may be distinguished not only from each other, but also from his benevolence. But while each particular attribute, so to speak, acts in subservience to benevolence, all act in perfect harmony. Benevolence is the central sun which gives direction, and power, and results, to the whole constellation of the particular moral attributes of a perfect moral governor. If compassion demands relief for the suffering, or if mercy dictates favor to the guilty, so does benevolence. If justice require legal sanctions, as it does under a merely legal system, benevolence also demands them as the necessary means of supporting the authority of the lawgiver, and as such, of promoting the general good.

Such are some of the ways or modes—and I know of no

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\* Vide APPENDIX on JUSTICE, Vol. II., p. 000.

other—in which it has been supposed that natural good and evil can become legal sanctions, instead of that which is now maintained to be the only mode. It is obvious however that they cannot become legal sanctions in any of these modes. If this be so, it is a fair conclusion that they can become legal sanctions in no other than that now maintained; that is, except as manifestations of the moral governor's highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience.

I argue the same thing—

In the second place, from what has been already shown respecting the nature of legal sanctions. We have seen that the moral governor can establish his authority only by natural good and evil annexed to his law as sanctions. Whatever else may be necessary for this purpose besides natural good and evil as legal sanctions, the establishing or sanctioning influence is exclusively from natural good as the reward of obedience, and from natural evil as the penalty of disobedience. But he cannot establish his authority, as we have shown, without manifesting his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience, and of course cannot establish his authority by natural good and evil as legal sanctions, except as they manifest these feelings. Since then, natural good and evil are necessary as legal sanctions; since they can become such only as manifestations of the moral governor's approval or disapproval, it follows, that they are necessary as legal sanctions, solely because they are requisite for the purpose of such a manifestation.

Or thus: it has been shown that the moral governor cannot establish his authority without manifesting his benevolence; that he cannot do this by natural good and evil as legal sanctions, unless they manifest the necessary feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action; and that these are the highest approbation of the one, and the highest disapprobation of the other. As then the moral governor cannot establish his authority by natural good and evil as legal sanctions, unless they manifest his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience, it follows, that they are required as legal sanctions, solely because they are necessary for the purpose of such a manifestation.

What has now been said will be more fully confirmed by

viewing the subject under some other aspects, and in some other connections. I proceed then to remark—

In the third place, that it is utterly unsupposable and inconceivable, that natural good and evil should become legal sanctions in any other mode, than as expressions or manifestations of the moral governor's highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience.

Every one knows, that promising natural good to obedience, in the form of law, and conferring it when obedience is rendered, is the appropriate and most significant possible expression of approbation of obedience; and that the threatening of natural evil to disobedience, in the form of law, and inflicting it when disobedience occurs, is the appropriate and most significant expression of disapprobation of disobedience. The degree of approbation in the one case, and of disapprobation in the other, are justly estimated and measured by the degree of natural good promised or conferred in the one case, and of natural evil threatened or inflicted in the other. Now, when these things are so—when, as we have seen, there is no other conceivable reason that a perfect moral governor should annex natural good and evil to his law as legal sanctions; or rather, when to annex them for any other conceivable reason or purpose, would disprove his moral perfection and subvert his authority, what good or sufficient reason could he have for annexing natural good and evil to his law as legal sanctions, and to do this for the purpose of establishing his authority, except that they are necessary for this purpose, and because they are the only significant and true, and therefore necessary, expressions of his approval of obedience and disapproval of the opposite.

Again; if natural good and evil can become legal sanctions in any other mode than by expressing the moral governor's highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience, it must be either *by not manifesting any degree of these feelings*, or *by manifesting some less degree of them than the highest*. Can he then establish his authority by natural good and evil as legal sanctions, without manifesting through them some degree of the feelings specified? This is plainly impossible. For they can be proof of nothing on the part of a moral governor on which his authority depends, unless they manifest on his part some degree of approbation of

obedience, and some degree of disapprobation of disobedience. As the appropriate and significant signs of these feelings, they necessarily express them. Even if they are considered as merely so much motive or inducement employed by him to secure obedience and to prevent disobedience, they necessarily imply a preference on his part for some reason or another—either a selfish or a benevolent preference—of obedience to disobedience, and of course some kind and degree of approbation of the one, and of disapprobation of the other. It is true indeed, that if they express these feelings in their selfish form, they become proof against his authority. But it is also true, that if they are not regarded as expressions of these feelings in any form, they can imply no preference of one kind of action to the other, and therefore can prove nothing in respect to the will, can establish nothing in respect to the feelings and character of the moral governor which can have the least bearing on the question of his authority, any more than were they the effects of an impersonal cause or physical agent. If then natural good and evil annexed to law as sanctions, do not manifest some approbation of obedience, and some disapprobation of disobedience on the part of the moral governor, they can prove nothing which can have the remotest connection with establishing his authority—nothing in respect to the purpose for which they are annexed to law. They can sanction nothing—they can prove nothing which can give him the right to reign, and therefore cannot be legal sanctions.

Again; it has been already shown that the moral governor can make no decisive expression, and therefore can furnish no decisive proof of his benevolence, except by natural good and evil as legal sanctions; nor by these, except as they express his approbation of obedience, and his disapprobation of disobedience. If therefore he does not make such manifestation, he furnishes no proof of his benevolence, and of course none of his authority. On the contrary, his failure to manifest these feelings by this means, decisively proves that he is not a benevolent but a selfish being, and utterly disproves his authority. Who would concede to another the right to govern—the right to impose his will as an authoritative rule of action, who should refuse to furnish the least proof of his approbation of right, and his disapprobation of wrong moral action, and who should thus furnish decisive proof of that selfishness which, to

subserve its purposes, is as ready to befriend and patronize wrong as right moral action—to sacrifice as to promote the highest happiness of his kingdom? Plainly the moral governor cannot establish his authority by natural good and evil as legal sanctions, without manifesting through them some degree of approbation of right, and some degree of disapprobation of wrong moral action.

To recur now to the other side of the alternatives; can the moral governor establish his authority by annexing to his law natural good and evil as sanctions, which manifest a less degree of the feelings specified than the highest? I answer; that to suppose that he can, is to suppose what is absurd and impossible. We have already seen that the moral governor, by annexing that degree of natural good and evil to his law as sanctions which would fully express the highest degree of the feelings specified, would thus manifest the true feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action, and thus decisively establish his authority. But it is obvious, that natural good and evil in this case would become proof of his benevolence solely by expressing his highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience. It is equally plain, that no less degree of natural good and evil would express these feelings. To suppose therefore, that any less degree of natural good and evil as legal sanctions than is necessary should manifest them, is absurd. To suppose that the manifestation of any other feelings either in kind or degree, than the true and necessary feelings of benevolence, should prove benevolence, is equally absurd. The benevolence then of the moral governor, and of course his authority, cannot be proved by any degree of legal sanctions less than that which shall manifest his benevolence in the form of its highest approbation of obedience, and his highest disapprobation of disobedience.

Again; the degree of natural good and evil annexed by the moral governor as sanctions to his law, is the measure and criterion of his approbation of obedience, and disapprobation of disobedience. It is undeniable, that by some given degree of natural good and evil as legal sanctions, he may express the highest degree of these feelings toward right and wrong moral action, and that by the lowest possible degree of natural good and evil as legal sanctions, he would express less approbation of right and disapprobation of wrong moral action, than the

highest, and of course less of these feelings toward these objects than the necessary feelings of benevolence. But we may as well suppose that the expression of the least possible degree of these feelings toward right and wrong moral action, is an expression of the necessary feelings of benevolence, as to suppose that any expression of these feelings short of the highest, is an expression of such feelings. But I need not say how preposterous would be the attempt of a moral governor to prove his benevolence and so to establish his authority, by expressing the least possible degree of approbation of that kind of action, which is the necessary means of the highest happiness of all, and the least possible degree of disapprobation of that kind of action, which is the sure means of the highest misery of all. If then he annexes to his law a less degree of natural good and evil, than that which is requisite to express his highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience, he furnishes no proof of the necessary feelings of benevolence, and of course no proof of his authority. On the contrary, he expresses a lower degree of approbation of obedience and of disapprobation of disobedience, than he as a benevolent being must feel, that is, he expresses that degree of approbation of right, and that degree of disapprobation of wrong moral action, which none but a selfish being can feel. The moral governor cannot establish or prove his authority, or rather he cannot avoid disproving it, without annexing as sanctions to his law, that degree of natural good and of natural evil which expresses his highest approbation of right, and his highest disapprobation of wrong moral action.

I remark yet again, that natural good and evil, which express a less degree of approbation of obedience, and a less degree of disapprobation of disobedience than the highest, cannot become legal sanctions by combining their influence with other influences, to establish the moral governor's authority. The contrary may be supposed. The supposition however is manifestly absurd, since there could be no legal sanctions in the case. Allowing what is indeed impossible, that benevolence of the moral governor may be proved, and that his authority may be fully or partially established by other evidence than that furnished by natural good and evil as legal sanctions, still neither this other evidence nor its sources can be legal sanctions; for nothing can be legal sanctions except

natural good and evil. Nor in the case supposed can they be such, since they do not by their own peculiar and exclusive influence establish the moral governor's authority. Nor is this all. The natural good and evil in the case supposed, cannot have the least tendency or influence whatever to establish his authority. Not expressing his highest approbation of obedience and disapprobation of disobedience, they furnish not the slightest evidence of these feelings, nor of course of the character, which is requisite to authority. They may be evidence of some kind or degree of approbation of right and of disapprobation of wrong moral action, but in no such degree as a perfectly benevolent being must feel. Whatever evidence of authority therefore may be supposed to be furnished by other sources, none can be furnished by the natural good and evil now supposed. On the contrary, these being *expressions*, are also a *proof* of a less degree of approbation of right and of disapprobation of wrong moral action than the highest, and are therefore evidence that the moral governor is not a benevolent but a selfish being, and can possess no authority. No other evidence then can establish the authority of the moral governor, except that which is furnished by natural good and evil as legal sanctions manifesting his feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action. No matter what evidence or proof of benevolence he may be supposed to furnish in his other relations, it is altogether neutralized and set aside by his failure to annex as sanctions to his law, that degree of natural good and evil which fully expresses his highest approbation of right and his highest disapprobation of wrong moral action.

If it should here be said—and I know of nothing more plausible on the question at issue (*Vide* LECTURE VI.)—that a greater amount of right moral action, and with it also of happiness, might be secured by a less degree of natural good and evil as legal sanctions than that now maintained, and that hence benevolence would require that a less degree of such good and evil be annexed to the law as sanctions; I answer, *in the first place*, that while the natural possibility of the supposed consequence must be admitted in a system including moral beings, the moral governor when assuming this relation in the promulgation of his law, can furnish *no proof to his subjects*, that a greater amount of right action and of happiness would be secured by

the supposed less degree of natural good and evil as legal sanctions. It *may* be otherwise, and to suppose that it would not be, is to make the supposition, when all the evidence in the case, and the best evidence the nature of the case admits of, is against its truth. It is supposing that a greater amount of right moral action would be secured by a less degree of influence fitted to secure it, than by a greater degree of such influence. The only rational conclusion in the case then is, that a greater amount of right moral action and of happiness would be secured by the degree of legal sanctions now maintained, than by any less degree. I answer, *in the second place*, that there could be no evidence or proof of the benevolence of the moral governor, but there would be decisive proof to the contrary. Nothing can be supposed to exist in the case, of the nature of evidence to this main fact, except the mere declaration of a being whose benevolence and of course his veracity are to be decided by what he does as a moral governor, and this too when all the evidence in the case is against the truth of his declaration. His mere declaration therefore in respect to the greater amount of right moral action and of happiness, cannot be received as evidence of the fact nor of his benevolence. *In the third place*, in the act of assuming this relation of a moral governor, he comes under its high and peculiar responsibility. He must now in the very act of assuming this relation, and in claiming the homage of his subjects, either show himself recreant to this high responsibility, and thus decisively disprove his right to rule, that is his authority; or he must fulfill the grand function of his office by proving his right to rule, that is, establish his authority by the necessary means of doing so. He cannot establish or prove his authority without furnishing decisive proof of his benevolence; and this he cannot do without annexing that degree of natural good and evil to his law as its sanction, which shall express the feelings of benevolence. On the contrary, without annexing such sanctions to his law, he shows himself selfish and recreant to his high and peculiar responsibilities as a moral governor, disproves his benevolence, and in consequence subverts his authority.

Nor can this decisive proof against his authority be set aside or weakened by any supposable results in the conduct of his subjects. Let us suppose a law without such sanctions as I advocate, and this law or rule of action to be followed with per-

fect conformity on the part of those to whom it is given, except in one single instance. In this case there could be no proof that a law with such sanctions as I advocate in its stead, would not be followed by perfect conformity without even one exception. Of course, there could be no proof that the lawgiver, in giving the law without such sanctions, acts benevolently. On the contrary, the proof as above stated, that he does not act benevolently, remains unimpaired and decisive. He makes no strong expression of the feelings of a benevolent being toward right and wrong moral action, which he must do, or disprove his benevolence and therefore his authority. Let us now suppose the same law to be given, and to be followed with perfect conformity on the part of subjects, without even a solitary exception. This would furnish no proof that the supposed law would be followed by the supposed result, even for an hour or a moment beyond the time in which it actually exists, nor that a law with the sanctions which I advocate, would not be followed with the supposed perfect obedience forever. There can of course be no proof that the lawgiver, in the case supposed, has annexed those sanctions to his law which benevolence requires him to do. Nor is this all. There can be no proof that he would annex such sanctions to his law as I advocate, did he know that the greatest good required it. By annexing therefore the supposed limited sanctions to his law, he not only does not prove his benevolence, but he never can prove it. He can furnish no evidence that he has any other feelings toward right and wrong moral action than those of a selfish being. The proof then of his benevolence, depends not on any present amount of right moral action on the part of subjects, under a law without the sanctions which I advocate; nor on any conjectures or supposed possibility respecting what would be the amount of such action under such a law. It depends not on what he declares respecting the result on right moral action, but on what he does in the time, and in the act of assuming the relation of one having a right to govern. The law must come forth from the throne, bearing the testimonial of such authority in its nature and form. It must be in itself, *i. e.* in its sanctions, a decisive testimonial of the feelings and the character of the lawgiver. Instead of waiting for the conduct of subjects to create its authority by their conformity to its demands, or leaving them to conjecture its authority, which implies that it has no

authority, it must bear unqualified and decisive proof of this in its very promulgation. As an expression of the feelings of perfect benevolence toward right and wrong moral action by the moral governor, that is, of his highest approbation of the one, and of his highest disapprobation of the other, its very announcement must invest it with authority. It must thus show what the moral governor is in his character, by showing what his feelings are toward right and wrong moral action, and as depending on these, toward the weal and woe of his kingdom. Why? Because, in this way, and in this way only, can the question of his authority be settled, when it should and must be, viz., when he gives the law. Because, as we have seen, in this way the best evidence which the nature of the case admits of would be furnished, because such evidence is imperiously demanded—because if he has the character which invests him with authority, it will be furnished, and because therefore if it is not furnished, it is decisive proof that he does not possess the character. Make what other supposition you will concerning his declarations or his doings, it is nothing better, and can be regarded by his subjects as nothing better than the barefaced hypocrisy of saying to a sufferer, ‘Be warmed, be filled, and giving nothing.’ He can easily settle the question of his character and his authority—he can at once place it beyond all reasonable doubt; he can thus bring that highest, best influence on the minds of his subjects, an influence as desirable as the highest happiness, and the prevention of the highest misery of his kingdom. If he expects confidence in his character or homage to his authority, why does he not show that he has the feelings toward the conduct of his subjects and the welfare of his kingdom, which alone can entitle him to their confidence, and their homage, and enthrone him in rightful dominion. Plainly if he does not do it—if he does not annex those sanctions to his law which express the feelings of benevolence toward right and wrong moral action, feelings which as a benevolent being he must not only have but must express, then he authorizes the belief that he is selfish and not benevolent, and in consequence disproves his authority. And it will not be pretended, that presenting himself to his kingdom in character nothing better than an infinite fiend, that he uses that degree of influence to secure right moral action, which will secure the greatest amount of such action which can be se-

cured, or that he can secure the least degree of it, by that influence which is essential to secure to the greatest amount of it, the influence of authority. Natural good and evil then, which as legal sanctions express the moral governor's highest approbation of right, and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, are necessary to prove his benevolence, and so to establish his authority.

In the third place, I remark, that the view now given of the nature of legal sanctions, is substantially that which all men entertain of the supreme law of the state, so far as they regard its authority. I say, so far as they regard its authority, meaning so far as they regard the law of the state as established and administered by disinterested love of country. Such indeed is the evidence of selfishness, even on the part of civil rulers, as distinguished from true patriotism, that in our utmost respect for civil government, we regard it as having a *quasi* authority rather than a real authority, and find ourselves under the necessity of imagining the latter, and acting as if we believed it, rather than actually believing it. Whether this be an imaginary or real regard for the authority of the law, I include it under the language which I use, and contemplate it as real. By that law of the state, which I call *supreme*, I mean that which is essential to the government of the state as a moral government, and obedience to which is the test of loyalty. *The reward* of obedience to this law, in language which admits of some qualification in extreme cases,\* but needs none for our present purpose, is the protection of life, liberty and property. *The penalty* of this law is death.

If now we contemplate the nature of this reward, and the condition on which it is conferred, we cannot fail to see its peculiar characteristic as a legal sanction. In its nature, it is obviously the highest good which a civil government can confer as a common blessing on its obedient subjects. It is conferred solely on condition of the subject's obedience to the supreme law of the state. It is therefore a plain and unequivocal

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\* I say admits of qualification, etc., because no man has, as some modern fanatical moralists and politicians maintain, an absolute right to either life, or liberty, or property, *i. e.*, in all cases or circumstances. When the public good demands the sacrifice of either or of all these blessings, whether on account of crime or for the defense of the state, or for the greatest public good in any way, the surrender must be made. The state has a right to it, and the subject has no opposing right.

ocal expression—a direct and decisive proof of the moral governor's highest approbation of obedience to this law. No subject can fail to regard it in this light, who reflects at all on its design; nor can he regard it in this light, without regarding it as a decisive manifestation of that character of the lawgiver, which alone becomes him as the guardian of a nation's welfare, and which alone gives him a right to rule. The subject doubtless will regard the reward as so much natural good, and as such, a motive to conform to the demand of the law. But as an obedient subject, as under and submitting to authority, he must regard the reward as something more than simply so much natural good as a motive. He must regard it as that which by manifesting the lawgiver's design to secure the highest welfare of the state, gives majesty to his law, and inspires reverence for his authority. Otherwise all we call the majesty of law or the authority of civil government, is reduced to the contemptible conceit of a mere contract or stipulation of so much hire for a certain amount of service. To call such a contract government or law, or to speak of its authority, is to talk of what has no existence. Viewed as a legal sanction then, reward is something more than so much natural good as a motive to fulfill the claim of law. It manifests the moral governor's highest approbation of that on the part of the subject which ought to be most highly approved, viz., his obedience, and carries to every mind the conviction of that character of the governor which gives him a right to rule, and thus establishes his authority.

The same thing is true in respect to the penalty of the civil law, viz., it is designed to establish the authority of the governor. This, as I maintain, it does, and is designed to do, as a direct and decisive expression and proof of his highest disapprobation of disobedience to the supreme law of the state. The penalty of this law, as I have said, is death. Here it were highly desirable, did our limits allow, to distinguish this penalty of the supreme law of the state from those punishments or penalties as they are often called, which are annexed to various particular and subsidiary legislative enactments, as merely so much good or evil in the form of motive to prevent transgression. This distinction I have attempted to trace in an appendix to this lecture.\* I will only say here, that it is evident that

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\* APPENDIX I.

this class of punishments are not legal sanctions ; inasmuch as the subject who incurs them, is virtually treated as an obedient subject, that is, he is virtually rewarded as such by being protected, with some qualification greater or less, in his life, liberty and property. The offenses for which this class of punishments is inflicted, do not, in the eye of the law, involve a principle of hostility to the state. But the penalty of death—the penalty of the supreme law of the state, is inflicted only for such crimes as treason or murder—crimes, which in the eye of the law, do involve a spirit of war on the happiness and existence of the state ; and which therefore require the expression of the highest disapprobation of him who is the guardian of the state. If now we consider this penalty in its adaptation and fitness to this end, we shall see that there can be no ground to doubt that it is designed to answer this end. And here it may be safely assumed that there can be no hesitation on this point, except this one, that death without torture is not, in the strictest accuracy of speech, the highest degree of natural evil which the governor can inflict for disobedience. Hence it may perhaps be inferred by some, that it is not designed as a direct and decisive expression of his highest disapprobation of disobedience ; but only as so much natural evil to deter from disobedience in the form of motive.

Admitting then, that in the strictest use of language (and who makes such a use of it in common life?) death without torture, is not the highest degree of natural evil which is possible in the case, there are three suppositions to be made and considered. One is, that on this account death is not according to the true mode of judging, viewed either by the governor or his subjects as an expression and proof of his disapprobation, or that it is not designed to be such by the governor, nor to be so regarded by his subjects. From this supposition, it follows that there is nothing in civil government, either as viewed by the governor or his subjects, which answers to the idea of authority. There is no evidence from the penalty, and therefore none from any source, that he has the least degree of disapprobation of obedience, and therefore no evidence that he has a right to rule. On the contrary, there is decisive proof that he has not this right. Civil government of course is not in *the lowest sense* a moral government. In its highest perfection, it involves not an iota of that influence which is called authority.

Another supposition is, that the governor and his subjects according to the true mode of judging—and it is difficult to see how it can be otherwise—regard the penalty of death as expressing *some* degree of disapprobation of disobedience to the supreme law of the state, but *not the highest degree*. On this supposition there can be no ground of confidence in his character as a civil ruler; and of course no recognition of his authority. As the head of an empire, that he may secure the confidence of his subjects, and command their submission to his authority as the rightful guardian of all, he is under a necessity of annexing a penal sanction of peculiar severity to the supreme law of the state. He is obliged to show that he will sacrifice the life of any subject, who like the traitor or the murderer, shall war on the welfare and existence of the state, rather than sacrifice the state itself. To test the truth of this remark, let it be supposed that he refuses to execute the traitor or the murderer, because he is his friend, or his favorite, or even his son; and would not an enlightened and just public sentiment frown him into infamy and contempt, as unworthy of his place and as having no right to rule? And why? Is it that as the only guardian of the state, he does not express some degree of disapprobation of a deed so hostile to the state which is less than the highest degree? Or is it, that in their estimation he does not express the highest disapprobation of the crime by the infliction of death as the requisite penalty? Plainly the latter, for without this view of the penal sanction, there could be no proof that the moral governor regarded the welfare of the state as the supreme good; that he would not sacrifice it to any inferior object or end. Whether the penalty of death can be *justly* regarded as the expression and proof of his highest disapprobation or not, it is undeniable that it must be so regarded, or there can be no ground of confidence in his character as the ruler and protector of the state, and of course no recognition of his authority. A third supposition then is not merely that it is so regarded, but that it is *justly* so regarded; in other words, that according to the true mode of judging in the case, both the governor and his subjects regard the penalty of death as a direct and decisive expression and proof of his highest disapprobation of disobedience to the supreme law of the state, and as such a *legal sanction*. But here the question arises, how can death without torture be justly regarded as such an ex-

pression? I answer, that in the common conceptions of all men, death is *the supreme evil to man*. It is, as it were, constantly in common speech, and of course in the common conceptions of the human mind, distinguished as the greatest of evils to man, considered as a being of earth and time. As such it is signalized in all human thought, familiarized as the evil most to be dreaded, and even personified as the king of terrors. The idea of it, is of so great an evil—it so absorbs thought and feeling by its own magnitude, that the ordinary suffering which is an attendant circumstance, is unthought of as enhancing it. If we dread its approach, if we adopt means to escape it ourselves or to prevent it in others, it is death as death that we think of, and not the sufferings it may bring with it. Or if we suppose a degree of suffering to be connected with it, it would be apt to attract and engross thought and feeling, and so to divert the dread of the greater evil to the less; and it is easier, as every one knows, to harden the mind against bodily suffering than against death, when the mind conceives the latter as an evil in its true magnitude. Nor can it be reasonably doubted, that the threatening of death—of death simply—death as the supreme evil in the habitual thought and feeling of the human mind, is fitted to make a stronger impression than the threatening of any other evil. Different effects might to some extent be produced on different minds by the supposed difference of penalty. But I now speak of the most general effect, and the thought and the fear of death are ever present to every mind in their practical and controlling power. Now it is of this universal habitual thought and fear of death, that the moral governor in presenting the penalty of his law avails himself. He conforms to this universal and familiar conception of the human mind; and when he would impress most effectually every subject with his highest disapprobation of disobedience to his supreme law, he makes that which in their constant and familiar conceptions is signalized as the supreme evil—the greatest of all evils—the expression and the proof of his disapprobation. What so natural, what so fitted to his design? They know how the language ought to be understood. He knows how it will be understood. He knows their conceptions of the evil, and is sure of the judgment which they will form of the degree of his disapprobation of disobedience, when thus measured by death as the penalty of his law. He thus shows himself the

benevolent protector of the welfare of the state, by showing himself in their just estimation the mortal enemy of rebellion against it. In the most natural, obvious and impressive manner, even in the only possible way, he manifests the highest disapprobation of disobedience to his supreme law; and so also the feelings and the character on which his authority depends.

Thus I have attempted to show, that the view now maintained of the nature of legal sanctions in a perfect moral government, is substantially that which mankind generally entertain of the sanctions of the supreme law of the state. If indeed we find, in the wisest and best administration of human government, some occasional departures from, or even violations of the principles contended for, still we also find the most distinct recognition of the principles themselves. Every such departure or violation is so obviously the result of the comparative inferiority of the interests to be protected, and the necessary imperfection of a human administration, not to say of its corruption, as clearly to show, that they cannot mar the moral administration of a Being infinitely perfect. Here no departure from the principles of eternal truth and righteousness can arise from weakness or error, from indifference or aversion to the end to be accomplished. The magnitude of the interests concerned, the value of the law as the indispensable means of securing these interests, the ill-desert of transgression as the destruction of this law, the relation and the authority of the lawgiver, are to be estimated, not by the standard of earth and time, but by that of eternity. And if what has now been said in respect to the sanctions of the law of the state be true, what can truth, and wisdom, and goodness demand in the government of a kingdom, where every act of every subject is virtually the perfect and endless happiness or misery of all, but a full and unqualified manifestation of the benevolence of Him that sitteth on the throne, in his highest approbation of right and disapprobation of wrong moral action? What other influence can command respect and reverence, or be fitted to secure confidential and cheerful submission to his will, except that which emanates from the sanctions of his law, revealing that character which alone becomes the friend and guardian of universal happiness—an influence from the manifestation of himself, clothing him with majesty as with a garment?

I shall conclude this lecture with three remarks :

1. Christianity is not a selfish system of religion. Infidels have often said, that Christianity, inasmuch as it aims to influence men by rewards and punishments, is a selfish, mean, and mercenary system. And I am sorry to say, that many of the friends and advocates of Christianity have furnished too much occasion for this reproach. It has often been said in the pulpit, that man cannot act under the influence of the divine threatenings without acting in a selfish manner; and yet oftener, *how this can be otherwise* has been deemed an unsolvable problem. The question more fully stated, is this: how can the promised good and the threatened evil involved in these sanctions be presented to the mind of man, without directly appealing to his selfishness; or, how can man act in view of these motives without acting in a selfish manner?

I answer, that according to the view now given of legal sanctions as involving natural good and evil, they appeal not to human selfishness at all, but only to self-love, or to the constitutional susceptibility of the mind to happiness and misery. They do not appeal to selfishness, because that would be to offer a less good than the greatest. But these sanctions proffer the highest good of which man is capable—the happiness of being good and doing good. And to choose this is to be disinterestedly benevolent. It is voluntarily renouncing every good which can come into competition with the public weal, and therefore truly virtuous. And further: the *direct* influence of these sanctions on the mind, as natural good and evil, wholly terminates in awakening constitutional desires to secure the one and avoid the other. Such desires are not voluntary states of the mind, not acts of the will, and therefore not selfishness, which is an act of will. They are simply constitutional feelings, inseparable from the nature of man as a sentient being, without which man could become neither benevolent nor selfish, but must be as insensible as a stone or a clod. By these susceptibilities, with their resulting states of desire, he is qualified, in one respect, to become either benevolent or selfish, and can therefore become selfish only by his own fault, only by the perversion of the influence, which is designed to secure the opposite result, benevolence. Nor is this all. For, while the reward and the penalty are designed and fitted to awaken strong constitutional emotion, the design by no means termi-

nates in this. They are designed to be subservient to another and a higher purpose—to show God to the mind, and to do it in the most impressive manner conceivable; to rouse thought and sensibility and emotion to behold God in his supreme approbation of obedience and supreme disapprobation of disobedience; to see and know this fact as one in which the mind has a direct personal concern. The design is to show, in such a manner that the mind shall not fail to see God in the glory of his holiness—with the full strength of his infinite will fixed on securing right and preventing wrong moral action. Such is the object presented through the medium of these sanctions. And is it selfishness for man thus seeing clearly and exactly what God is, to love him? Is there any influence more directly sanctifying in its tendency, more fitted to make holy than that which is furnished by this vision of the perfect God? And is it mean or mercenary for man to yield himself to do the will of infinite wisdom and goodness, and thus in heart, in will and character, to become like God himself?

2. In the view which has now been given of legal sanctions, we may see what it is to make light of the divine threatenings. I here speak hypothetically. If God is administering a perfect moral government over men, then in view of the sanctions of such a government, what is it to make light of them? What are they? Manifestations of God, peculiarly bright, glorious, and awful. They are manifestations of God in that character, under that high relation to man, which is more desirable, more exalted, more worthy of Himself, and more useful to man, than any the human mind can conceive. If a perfect God is not also the perfect moral governor of his moral creation, what is he? I am not now saying that he is. But if he is not, I ask you what he is? Have you decided, can you decide surely and beyond all doubt, what that relation is which God sustains to moral beings if not that of their moral governor? Do not, then, make light of what are and what must be—if he is their moral governor—the sanctions of his law. Prove Christianity to be false if you can. But do you know, can you prove, that God is not administering a perfect moral government over his moral creation? This is at least a possible truth. There may be such a God, such a government, such sanctions. And it is any thing but philosophy, reason, or magnanimity to trifle with such possible reality as this. Say if you must, that

you do not believe that proof is wanting; but do not ridicule, do not despise and make light of it, lest haply you make light of God in the brightest splendors of his glory.

3. Those who deny the view now given of the sanctions of a perfect moral government cannot prove the benevolence of God. Deists, universalists, all those who deny either the fact or the nature of God's perfect moral government, profess to believe that God is perfectly benevolent. This belief, to man in his weakness and consequent dependence on his Maker, it would seem must be quite welcome, not to say natural. It is the only source of light in this dark world; the only refuge from terror. What an amount of misery must result from the thought of a tyrant in the heavens, and of the cruelties to which his creation must be exposed. Ignorant as men may be of goodness, and little as they may esteem or desire it for themselves, all know how to appreciate it when compared with the opposite character, as that of the Being who holds in his hands their destiny. Hence, even with those who entertain inadequate and false views of its nature and its necessary doings, it is a fond and favorite belief that God is good.

But it is a momentous question, can they, *on their principles*, show any ground for this belief; can they prove that God is good? I answer, not unless they can show that he is administering a perfect moral government over men. If this can be proved, if it can be seen from the light of nature that he is administering a perfect moral government over men involving on his part the highest approbation of right and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action; if it can be shown that he has *so begun* the administration of his moral government in this world, that *he can*, and that he furnishes sufficient evidence that *he will* finish it in another; that he is carrying forward such a system in respect to each individual of our race as rapidly as its perfection demands, and this with a singleness of purpose to complete what he has begun, and with a benignity of execution which foretells results worthy of infinite goodness, especially if it can be proved that he is administering such a government under an economy of grace, then indeed it may not be difficult to prove his perfect benevolence. Then we may be able to show that he has adopted the best conceivable system, that moral evil is incidental in respect to divine prevention to this best system; that natural evil is the

necessary means of the greatest good ; and that the system itself, with its issues here and hereafter, is as decisive a proof of the goodness of its author, as had no evil but the perfect and universal happiness of his creation been the actual result. But if on the other hand, it cannot be shown that God is administering a perfect moral government, involving the manifestation of his highest approbation of right, and his highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, then his benevolence or moral perfection cannot be proved. Yet more is true. If the proof of benevolence is wanting in respect to a being who has been acting for thousands of years in the view of his intelligent and dependent creatures, the want of such evidence is itself proof of the opposite character.

If you say, that aside from the fact that God is administering a perfect moral government over men, there is abundant proof of his benevolence, I ask, what is it and what are your premises ? You must know or prove something to be true of God, that you may frame an argument. If God then is not a perfect moral governor of men, what is he ? What relation or relations does he sustain toward his dependent creatures, and what are his designs and purposes concerning them ? If you cannot decide these questions, then you know and can decide nothing to your purpose. On the question of his moral character you have no data, no premises ; and you must either believe nothing respecting it, or believe that he is a selfish or malignant being, or that he is good without evidence, and merely because you wish to believe it.

What then is the proof that God is benevolent, on the supposition that he is not a perfect moral governor ? Is it said, that as a being of infinite natural perfection, he must be also a being of infinite benevolence ? I answer, not so, not of necessity, for he is a free moral agent ; nor yet of certainty, for other moral beings are wholly selfish, and yet are not so through the imperfection of their natural powers. I admit indeed, that the natural perfections of God furnish a presumption of his moral perfection, even sufficient proof of it, if it can be shown to be uncounteracted by opposing evidence. But it is a kind of evidence which in its nature admits of opposing evidence, and may be wholly neutralized and set aside by his acts and his doings, by his treatment of his creatures. His natural perfections then, in view of the existing evil under his government, furnish no

proof, nothing like proof, of his benevolence, until the existence of evil be accounted for consistently with his benevolence. If a father, in all that he has done for his dependent offspring from birth to manhood, has furnished no proof of affection and kindness toward them by his conduct, to what purpose should we appeal to his intellectual and physical superiority, or even to the fact that he is their father? The evidence from his doings, from the utter want of benevolent action, would be decisive against his benevolence. Do you then appeal to the doings of God, and claim that he proves himself to be good by imparting more happiness than misery to his creatures, and thus rendering their existence far preferable to non-existence? This fact, though it may be necessary to the proof, is not itself proof of the goodness of the Creator. Beings who are not benevolent but are wholly selfish, often produce more happiness than misery. Why then does not an omnipotent Creator impart perfect and unmingled happiness to his sentient creation; why, under his government, is there misery at all? Do you say, that nothing is contrived to produce misery, that every design and adaptation is to produce good, that "teeth are made to eat and not to ache." This is not true in such a respect as your argument requires. Teeth are made to ache. He who made them, knew that they would ache, and for some reason or other intended that they should ache. And the question is, why not make teeth which would not ache? Is there any pretense that God has produced all the natural good he can, so far as mere power is concerned? Do you then say, that the fact that creatures are not perfectly happy, is not owing to the want of power in God, but to some limitation in the nature of things; that the system by which alone the greatest good possible to the Creator can be produced involves, in respect to his prevention, evil in the nature of things? What evil? You cannot say all the natural evil which exists. Do you then say moral evil, and as a necessary and useful consequence, natural evil? Be it so. But then, what is *that system* which thus necessarily in the nature of things involves moral evil? Plainly a moral system, a moral government; and if it be proof of a perfect God, then it must be a perfect moral government. But now you are on our ground. You are reasoning from the fact that God is administering a perfect moral government over men. And thus you are compelled to reason, if you would find the shadow of proof

that God is benevolent, or rather if you would set aside the most decisive proof that he is not benevolent. And now if you mean to reason in proof of the divine benevolence on this ground, then do not forget it. *God, you believe, is administering a perfect moral government over men.* If you do not, and say that there is some other mode of proving his benevolence than on the ground that he is administering a perfect moral government over men, then tell us what it is. This is one of the great points in the argument for God's benevolence. It is not to be passed over lightly, to be conceded for the moment, to be used for the purpose of establishing a conclusion and then forgotten as the most momentous relation of God to his moral creation. If God is not the perfect moral governor of men, we want to know what he is, what are his relations, designs, and doings toward the children of men; we want to know what his character is; we want to know whether there is nothing on the throne of the universe but omnipotent selfishness or infinite malignity; we want to know, in a word, what the God of the infidel is.

He is not to have the benefit to his argument and his system of the belief in a benevolent God, unless he can prove that in truth there is such a God. This he cannot do without admitting the fact—which, as I maintain, is fatal to his infidelity—the truth *that God is administering a perfect moral government over men.* He is shut up to this alternative. He must admit either that God feels the highest approbation of right and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, or that he does not; that God reigns over us in the glory of a perfect moral dominion, or that the Being who holds all destiny in his hands is a being of unqualified selfishness, or even of infinite malignity. From this dilemma there is no escape.

And now I request those infidels, universalists—all who deny that God feels the highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, and as a perfect moral governor will express these feelings—to look carefully at this point. You believe in the perfect benevolence of God. But is your faith rational according to your own principles; has it the least foundation or warrant unless God is the perfect moral governor? You believe in God's perfect benevolence. Why? Have you examined the foundations of your faith? Have you seen, that if you believe in God's benevolence, you must

believe in God's perfect moral government over yourself and all men? Have you looked at the monstrous incongruity in a God perfectly benevolent, and yet not feeling the highest approbation of right, and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action? Or rather, for you will allow me to ask the question, is not this aspect of God unwelcome and repulsive, and excluded from your faith for the sake of what seems to you the more attractive and lovely view of a being who is good without being just, and virtually indifferent to the best thing as the means of happiness, and to the worst thing as the means of misery, right and wrong moral action? If so, see where you stand. As a rational being you are bound to believe in an infinite God who is virtually indifferent to that action in his creatures, which will secure their highest happiness or misery—indifferent to the weal and woe, the life and death of his own creation—a being who has no rectitude of principle, and who, for aught that appears, will sacrifice to self-will, to favoritism, to selfishness in some form, every interest of every creature whose character can excite no love, awaken no hope, inspire no confidence—whose heart is unmoved by pity, untouched by woe—a being, the bare thought of whom is enough to fill the soul with consternation and dismay. If there is any thing in reason, such is—such must be the God of the infidel. And if the aspect of the God of Christianity is unwelcome and repulsive, what is that of the God of infidelity? The character of the former to a wise and good man (I know I speak with the approbation of every man's conscience) is ground only for hosannas of rapture—that of the latter would make all things tremble but the dark throne on which he himself sitteth.

## LECTURE VIII.

V. A perfect Moral Government involves the exercise of authority through the medium of law.—The nature of the law further unfolded.—Seventhly. The Law of a perfect Moral Government involves the requisite sanctions of the Moral Governor's authority.—6th. Legal sanctions include the highest possible degree of natural good, &c., and the highest possible degree of evil.—OBSERVATIONS.—Punishment ought to terminate with sin; if all should disobey, all ought not to be punished; incredible and impossible that God should adopt a moral system with such liabilities.—Conclusion.

I now proceed to show as I proposed—

6th. *That the legal sanctions of a perfect moral government include the highest degree of natural good possible in each case of obedience, and the highest degree of natural evil possible in each case of disobedience.*

The doctrine has often been maintained, that natural good and evil in their highest degree, annexed to the best law as its reward and penalty, become legal sanctions by operating simply as motives (or inducements) to secure the greatest amount of obedience. We have seen however, that natural good and evil employed *merely* in the way of motives, cannot become *legal sanctions*. It is doubtless true that the natural good and evil employed as legal sanctions, have beside their sanctioning influence and as necessary to it, another, even the influence of motives. This with the sanctioning influence, or with that which establishes the authority of the moral governor, may be necessary to secure the greatest amount of obedience. If we could suppose a system designed to secure the greatest amount of right moral action by the mere influence of natural good and evil as motives, and to the exclusion of the peculiar influence of moral government—the influence of authority—then we could not say, that the highest possible degrees of natural good and evil would not be necessary to the end proposed. Be this however as it may, the present argument for the highest degrees of natural good and evil is not placed on this basis. It rests solely on the ground that such degrees of natural good and evil are necessary for another purpose, that of sanctioning or establishing the authority of the moral governor.

This argument, in view of what has been already said, may be thus briefly presented. Natural good and evil are necessary as legal sanctions to the law of a perfect moral government; they are necessary as legal sanctions, for in their relation they establish and sustain the authority of the moral governor; they are so as being the necessary manifestations of his benevolence in the particular forms of his highest approbation of obedience and disapprobation of disobedience. This degree of approval and disapproval can be manifested *only* by the highest possible degree of natural good as the reward of obedience and of natural evil as the penalty of disobedience. It follows therefore, that the highest possible degree of natural good as a legal reward, and of natural evil as a legal penalty are necessary to establish the authority of the moral governor.

This argument contains two premises in addition to others already considered, which, obvious as they are, may need a more particular consideration.

I remark then—

In the first place, *that the legal reward must, for the purpose specified, consist of the highest possible degree of happiness to the obedient subject.*

I now speak of that degree of reward which pertains to a perfect system of moral government—a system in which the highest happiness of each individual is consistent with that of the whole. Some indeed maintain the impossibility of such a system, affirming that the sin and misery of a part are the necessary means of the greatest good of the whole. To this I here briefly reply, that the assumption of a system in which the highest good of each shall be consistent with that of the whole as an impossibility, is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized, since the supposition of such a system cannot be shown to involve any contradiction or absurdity. And further, if such a system of moral government is impossible, then a perfect system of moral government is impossible; indeed, any thing which can be called a moral government is impossible; for sin being according to the supposition, the necessary means of the greatest good, there can be no sincerity, truth, or benevolence, and of course no authority in a lawgiver who should forbid it. And lastly, the supposed perfect system is possible, nothing being more absolutely certain, than that every moral agent and therefore every subject of a moral government can be morally per-

fect, and that the moral perfection of each and of all in its true tendency, would secure the perfect happiness of each and of all. If then in such a system the moral governor does not secure the highest happiness of the obedient subject which he can secure, he does not choose to make the subject thus happy; and as the highest happiness of each obedient subject is consistent with and necessary to the highest happiness of the whole, he neither chooses the highest happiness of the individual, nor of the whole. He is therefore not benevolent, and has no right to give law to a moral kingdom. The same thing on the present supposition may be shown in other forms. Not choosing to make the obedient subject happy in the highest possible degree, the moral governor does not express the highest approbation of obedience, and therefore does not feel it. He therefore proves that he is not benevolent, and of course subverts his authority or right to command. Or thus, according to what has been already shown, the decisive expression of the moral governor's highest approbation of obedience, is indispensable as a proof of such approbation, while not to make such an expression gives equal evidence of the want of such approbation—proof of the want of benevolence—of the opposite principle, and of course of the want of all authority or right to rule. But the only conceivable mode of proving his highest approbation of obedience, is by conferring on the obedient subject on account of his obedience the highest possible degree of happiness. Otherwise he can furnish no proof that he does not feel, and would not express higher approbation of disobedience than of obedience. If then he does not confer on the obedient subject the highest possible degree of happiness as a legal reward, he does not regard obedience as he ought, or as a perfect being must regard it. He shows himself to be destitute of benevolence, and therefore without authority.

Again; if the moral governor does not confer the highest possible happiness on the obedient as a reward, there can be no proof that he would do it, were it necessary to prevent the universal disobedience, and with it the universal and perfect misery of his kingdom. Nor is the supposition of such a necessity unauthorized. There can be no proof that it does not exist. The declaration of the moral governor to the contrary cannot be received as evidence; for there is no proof of his benevolence, and of course none of his veracity. Such a re-

ward may be necessary to prevent such a fearful issue. But since the moral governor refuses according to the present supposition, to annex such a reward to his law, when as we have seen it is dictated by benevolence and demanded by the highest happiness of his kingdom, it follows, that there can be no proof that he would confer such a reward were it necessary to prevent the universal disobedience, and with it the universal and perfect misery of his kingdom. As he does not confer the reward which is demanded by benevolence in the one case, there can be no reason to conclude that he would in the other. What confidence can be reposed in such a being—what authority can he possess?—He, a being of whose benevolence there is not the slightest evidence—of whose selfishness the proof is decisive, and who may, as all are bound to believe, consent to and actually prefer the universal and perfect wretchedness of his kingdom, rather than confer the highest happiness which he can confer on perfectly obedient subjects.

Should it here be said, that the highest possible degree of happiness as a legal reward, is inconsistent with different degrees of reward according to the merit of different subjects, I answer, that the capacity of happiness in different subjects would differ according to their character. If we suppose various degrees of merit in subjects who are perfectly obedient, we must suppose different degrees of capacity for happiness. Should each therefore receive as a reward the highest possible amount of happiness, that is, the highest of which he is capable, degrees of reward would exist, differing according to the degrees of merit.

In respect to *the duration* of reward, I remark, that from the very nature of law, it follows, that reward must continue while obedience continues, and cease when obedience ceases. That it must do so, is obvious from what has been already shown. To suppose reward to be withheld from a subject who continues obedient, is to suppose no approbation, but disapprobation of obedience on the part of the moral governor, and of course the want of authority. That the reward must cease when obedience ceases—every expression of approbation of the conduct of the subject on the part of the governor is equally obvious. The demand of the law is, that the subject render ceaseless obedience, and the subject is bound to render it. When therefore he ceases to obey, he ceases to satisfy the claim of law—ceases

to fulfill his obligation—ceases to be an obedient subject. All ground of approbation by the moral governor ceases, and it is impossible that he should regard and treat the subject as obedient, without regarding and treating him as he is not; without regarding the non-fulfillment of the claim of law, as obedience to it. The governor can therefore never confer a reward on the disobedient subject, without approving of his failure to satisfy the claim of law. If we suppose the disobedient subject to reform, this cannot so change his relation to law as to cause him to stand right in law, or to become the fit object of favor and reward from the moral governor. He has not satisfied the claim of law, but violated it. He never can satisfy it. The lawgiver therefore must cease to express all approbation of the subject by ceasing forever to reward, or he must reward in view of his unsatisfied claim for obedience; that is, he must pass by, overlook, and virtually approve and reward transgression, and thus subvert his authority.

We may view this topic in another light. The disobedient subject destroys all law and all authority. His act in its true nature and tendency destroys all good and produces all evil. His ill-desert is not so diminished by subsequent reformation, as not to require that degree of penalty which is necessary to express the moral governor's highest disapprobation of such an act. The deed has been done which creates the necessity for such an infliction of evil. Without it, no adequate expression can be made of the moral governor's feelings toward the act, nor of his benevolence. But the principle now stated will be still more obvious, when we consider the degree of penal evil which is necessary to establish and sustain the moral governor's authority.

I remark, then—

In the second place, *that the legal penalty must consist of the highest possible degree of misery to the disobedient subject.*

Were the moral governor to inflict a less degree of suffering as a legal penalty than the highest possible in the case, nothing would or could appear to show that he would not inflict greater suffering for something else, even for some act of obedience, than he inflicts for disobedience. Why else, when every object and end for expressing disapprobation at all, imperiously demands the expression of the highest disapprobation, when as we have

seen, nothing can justify him in inflicting natural evil as a penalty, except the necessity of so doing to establish his authority by showing his highest disapprobation of disobedience, or that there is nothing which he so much abhors as this supreme evil, why does he not show it? Were he to make the transgressor this enemy of all good, this author of universal and absolute misery, in the highest degree miserable, that would put at rest the question of his own supreme abhorrence of transgression. None could doubt that he is a being of perfect benevolence, and has the necessary feelings of such a being toward wrong moral action. If this be not done, then he can furnish no proof that such is his character. He furnishes decisive proof to the contrary. The appropriate necessary expression of his highest abhorrence of rebellion is not made. Whatever may be the reason for refusing to do it, it is an insufficient reason. He furnishes not the shadow of evidence that he acts upon the principle of immutable rectitude of benevolence. He does not show that he has that supreme abhorrence of rebellion which a benevolent being must have, and as a perfect governor must show himself to have. There is no evidence that he does not inflict suffering, regardless of every good and sufficient reason for inflicting it—regardless of every principle of rectitude, and therefore as a matter of caprice or despotical humor, at least as the dictate of the selfish principle. There is proof rather that he is actuated by the selfish principle. Not acting in the relation of a moral governor, as a benevolent being must act, he proves himself to be a selfish being. Why then, if disposed, will he not inflict greater suffering on the obedient than he inflicts on the disobedient! What confidence can be placed in the character of such a being? What authority or right to reign can he possess?

Again; the moral governor, by not inflicting the highest possible suffering on the transgressor, shows that he esteems the transgression of his law a less evil than the infliction of such a penalty. Transgression, if unpunished in one instance, utterly destroys the authority of law—destroys the highest happiness of all of which the authority of the law is the necessary means, and produces all the misery, of the prevention of which the authority of law is the necessary means. When transgression occurs, the alternative on the part of the moral governor is, either to consent to the destruction of his authority

with these fearful results, or to sustain it, by expressing his highest disapprobation of transgression in the infliction on the transgressor of the highest degree of suffering. Such being the alternative, he shows, by refusing to inflict the supposed penalty, that he prefers a far greater evil to a less. No matter what the reason or motive may be, none can be supposed for not inflicting the requisite penalty, which will not bring upon him the imputation of preferring the destruction of his authority, and the production of all the misery, the prevention of which depends on its support, to the infliction of that penalty on the transgressor which is requisite to maintain his authority, and to prevent the evil resulting from its subversion. By refusing to inflict this penalty, he shows that he esteems such a deed, with its ruin and its miseries, a less evil than the infliction of the highest degree of suffering on the author of the deed. By the infliction of such a penalty, its evil tendency would be counteracted and its results prevented; and yet the moral governor refuses to inflict it. He becomes therefore the voluntary responsible author of all this evil. Who would or could confide in his character, or submit to his authority?

Once more; if the moral governor does not inflict the highest possible suffering on the transgressor, there can be no evidence or proof that he would inflict such a penalty, if it were necessary to secure the obedience and perfect happiness of all, and to prevent the disobedience and perfect misery of all forever. I do not say, as some have said, that this penalty is necessary to the result now specified. But I affirm that there can be no proof that there is not. The moral governor's declaration would be no proof on this point, for as yet his character for benevolence and veracity is not established. There can therefore be no possible evidence or proof in the view of his subjects, that the supposed penalty is not necessary to secure the obedience and perfect happiness of all, and to prevent their disobedience and perfect misery forevermore; and therefore, none that the moral governor, with the knowledge of this necessity, would inflict the penalty—no proof that he would punish a single individual, were it necessary on the one hand to make his kingdom a paradise of holiness and joy, and on the other, to prevent it from becoming a pandemonium of sin and misery; no proof that he does not prefer the destruction

of the perfect happiness and the production of the perfect misery of *all*, rather than inflict the same evil on *one* who is the author of the direful result; no proof that the least security—the least barrier against sin, exists in the character of the moral governor; that holiness and its joys will not utterly cease to exist, and sin and its woes reign without restraint and without mitigation; the universe become an unqualified hell, and the moral governor stand revealed in his true character, a selfish, malignant being, the accessory of the transgressor, the patron of sin, the responsible author of the eternal misery of all. Such, according to the evidence in the case, and in the view of his subjects, would be the character of a moral governor who should refuse to inflict the highest degree of suffering, as the penalty of transgressing the best law.

It can hardly be necessary to say, that according to the view now given of legal penalty, the suffering of the transgressor, *if it be possible*, must be unmingled and eternal. The only supposable case in which an Omnipotent moral governor cannot inflict unmingled suffering, is that of a penitent, reformed transgressor. The natural possibility that a transgressor, under a system of mere law, should reform or return to duty, and the impossibility of rendering such a one perfectly miserable, or as miserable as he might be rendered without reforming, may be admitted. On the supposition however of the reformation of a transgressor, he would still be capable of suffering in some degree; and the highest degree of suffering *possible in his case*, would fully evince the moral governor's highest disapprobation of his transgression. It would, as such an expression, fully establish his authority, and would be necessary for this purpose. In the case of the impenitent transgressor, unmingled suffering would be possible, and is therefore the degree of suffering which, in his case, is requisite to sustain the moral governor's authority. Its eternal duration is possible, and therefore in all cases it must be eternal, that it may answer the end of a legal penalty in a perfect moral government.

Some objections to the view of legal sanctions, which has now been given, demand consideration.

Objection 1. It is said, that on the principle, that reward is to be continued only while obedience continues, it follows, that punishment is to be continued only while disobedience continues; in other words, that the repentance or reformation of

the transgressor is a just ground of forgiveness and favor from the moral governor.\*

This objection derives all its plausibility from a false view of the essential claim of law. It supposes that law does not in its very nature claim uninterrupted obedience, or that present conformity to law, however frequently it may have been interrupted by transgression, is still obedience, and as such justly entitled to the reward. If this be so, then all that the law claims is to transgress and reform. The claim of the law is satisfied by transgression and reformation. To transgress and reform, is obedience to law by satisfying the claim of the law. To transgress and reform is therefore all that the law does, or can justly demand of its subjects. Without affirming that the lawgiver in such a case would prove himself to be as well pleased with transgression as with reformation on the part of the subject, it is plain, that he shows himself to be as well pleased with transgression and reformation as with uninterrupted obedience. This is too absurd to be maintained by any. But why is it, that when obedience ceases, reward must also cease, and punishment begin, never to cease? It is because the law of a perfect moral government requires, and to deserve the name of law must require, the uninterrupted obedience of the subject, and because the lawgiver can sustain his authority by the sanction of reward, only by rendering reward to that which satisfies the claim of law. In rewarding for uninterrupted obedience, he rewards on the only possible ground of a just legal reward—that the claim for uninterrupted obedience is satisfied by the subject. In this way only can the reward become an expression of his highest approbation of that which satisfies his claim on the subject, and thus support his authority. If obedience be interrupted by an act of disobedience, the claim of the lawgiver is not satisfied by the subject, and never can be. Of course the only ground of conferring a reward, by which the lawgiver can accomplish the

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\* Many advocates of the doctrine of endless punishment unwarily admit, that punishment is to be continued only while disobedience continues, by vindicating the justice of such punishment on the ground of continued sin. They thus concede, that without continued sin, eternal punishment would be unjust. I only say here, that this is not vindicating the doctrine of revelation, which declares, that "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them."

end of a legal reward, does not exist, and never can exist. He can express no approbation of the subject by a reward conferred on the ground of his satisfied claim. If he express approbation at all, it must be in view of his claim, as unsatisfied and violated by the subject who is rewarded. By such an act, he relinquishes his claim for uninterrupted obedience,—allows transgression, which, in one instance, is the destruction of all good. He shows himself satisfied with, and approving transgression, by becoming the friend and patron of the transgressor. The reason then is obvious, why uninterrupted reward, according to the very nature of law, is exclusively connected with uninterrupted obedience, viz., the claim, and only claim of law on the subject, is satisfied by such obedience, and can be satisfied by nothing else. The reason is equally obvious, why uninterrupted punishment is connected with interrupted obedience, and not exclusively with uninterrupted transgression—viz., the claim, and only claim of law on the subject, is not satisfied by transgressing and repenting, but is as truly unsatisfied and violated as by continued transgression.

Again; it is objected, obedience during a limited period, does not deserve a future endless reward, while disobedience in one instance does deserve an endless punishment. The good and ill-desert of conduct in a subject of moral government are to be determined by, or rather they are themselves the relations of his conduct to the support and the subversion of the moral governor's authority. The obedience of the subject supports the moral governor's authority so long, and only so long as it is rendered. It does not extend its influence in this respect through all futurity, and thus give eternal support to the lawgiver's authority. The subject while obedient, fulfills only a present obligation, and satisfies a present claim. He therefore does nothing, and can do nothing which can have any influence to sustain the lawgiver's authority beyond the present effect of his present obedience. Whether he will support this authority in future, depends on his future obedience. Having then given no support by his obedience to the authority of the lawgiver for the future, he can deserve no reward for so doing. The sole reason for conferring upon him a reward for his obedience is, that his obedience supports the lawgiver's authority, while it is rendered. If then his obedience ceases, so does its influence in this respect and with it every reason for a reward, and of

course all desert of reward. But this is not all. The subject, by ceasing to obey becomes disobedient; and by this one act, if its influence be uncounteracted by the execution of penalty, he destroys the authority of the moral governor forever. He can in no way prevent the effect, either by doing or by suffering. He is as ill-deserving as were the effect to follow, as had he laid the authority of the moral governor in ruin forevermore, and must himself remain as ill-deserving forever. His ill-desert can neither be diminished, canceled, nor annihilated. The relation of transgression to law, its tendency to destroy its authority and to subvert moral government is eternal. It is true, the moral governor, by the execution of the legal penalty, can counteract this tendency, can prevent the actual effect, can uphold his own authority. He can do this however, not by annihilating the transgression of his law, nor its tendency to destroy his authority, but only by punishment as his continued act, expressing his continued supreme disapprobation of the transgressor. The punishment cannot change at all the nature and tendency of the transgression. It simply in the manner already explained, counteracts this tendency of transgression, and thus holds back the effect which would follow the moment in which punishment should cease. The sole reason for inflicting the penalty of law is not diminished nor removed by its infliction for any limited period. Of course the ill-desert of transgression is not lessened nor removed by such an infliction. The entire influence of the penalty is to uphold the moral governor's authority, as a continued expression and proof of his highest disapprobation of transgression. As the tendency of transgression to destroy his authority is eternal, the expression of his highest disapprobation of transgression in the form of legal penalty must be eternal.

Let us look still further at the doctrine under consideration. The principle on which the doctrine rests is, that *equity* or *justice* demands that the penitent reformed transgressor of law be forgiven and rewarded. It is to no purpose to say, that the act of forgiving the penitent transgressor is *an act of sovereignty* on the part of the lawgiver; for it cannot be vindicated as such under a merely legal dispensation, unless it be consistent with benevolence in the form of general justice; and if it be consistent with general justice under such a dispensation, that the subject of law be exempted from the penalty of law, then it

must be inconsistent with general justice either to threaten to punish, or actually to punish him for transgression. Of course justice forbids his punishment, that is, demands his exemption from the legal penalty. His exemption therefore is not by sovereignty.

In respect to this principle, I remark, that it is a groundless and unauthorized assumption. Who will pretend that he either knows or can prove, that the great ends of a perfect moral government and of infinite benevolence can be secured by such a principle? Who can know or prove, that were the moral governor to act on this principle in a single instance, it would not defeat every design of infinite goodness, and fill the universe with unmingled and unending woe?

The principle derives no support from the practice of human governments. Whatever may be the ground of pardon in these cases, it is not the principle of equity or justice. When has the principle been recognized and proclaimed in the family, that murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, or in the state, that traitors, conspirators, men reeking with crime and blood, are justly entitled to pardon and reward on condition of repentance? On this principle, the vilest malefactor cannot be justly punished, until it is first ascertained that he is not a penitent; for being so, he has an equitable claim to pardon and reward. Why then in the name of all that is sacred in human rights, is not this principle of equity recognized and acted upon? Why is not a court of equity established to vindicate these rights of injured innocence?

On this principle a lawgiver has no right to punish transgression of law at all, but only to punish impenitence after transgression. It is not rebellion, but solely the want of repentance.

So also the transgressor of law cannot be justly punished for transgression which only deserves punishment. And if he cannot be justly punished for transgression, he cannot be justly punished for that which only deserves punishment; cannot be justly punished for that for which alone he can be justly punished.

On the same principle repentance itself is impossible. There can be no repentance where there is no guilt or ill-desert. But if there is no ill-desert except in the want of repentance, then there is nothing in transgression which can be repented of. The transgressor has no reason to repent of any thing whatever, or

at most of a transgression which furnishes no ground or reason for repentance. Is it said, that by repentance, the transgressor acknowledges that it would be just to punish him for his transgression? Then plainly justice does not require that he go unpunished, *i. e.*, that he be pardoned for his repentance. Besides, if it is just to punish, benevolence or the general good requires punishment. How then can justice, benevolence, or the general good require his punishment, and also his exemption from punishment?

On this principle, there is nothing in transgression or sin, neither guilt nor ill-desert to be forgiven; nothing except impenitence after transgression. But there can be no impenitence; for impenitence implies previous sin, guilt or ill-desert. So that there can be nothing to be forgiven, neither sin nor impenitence. Forgiveness therefore is impossible and inconceivable. There can be no grace in forgiveness; for grace is favor or kindness to the guilty, and there is no guilt in transgression, nor yet in impenitence. There can be no influence to deter from transgression in law nor authority; nor in any thing else an influence to prevent any thing but impenitence and this can have no existence. Repentance for sin cannot be a duty, for sin or transgression involves nothing to be repented of. There can be no reason on the part of the moral governor for prohibiting sin; nor for displeasure, should every subject transgress his perfect law; for the only evil in the case is impenitence after transgression, which impenitence itself is impossible. Nor can the moral governor with the least reason or propriety require obedience to his law; for as there is nothing morally wrong in transgression, there can be nothing morally right in obedience. In short, the principle that justice requires the forgiveness of sin on condition of repentance, subverts all moral distinctions, and every relation between the moral governor and his subjects.

This subject may be presented in other lights. Let it be supposed that a penitent transgressor is forgiven and restored to favor. The natural and authorized conclusion on the part of any and every other subject is, that if he transgresses and repents, he also shall be forgiven and restored to favor. What then is there in the legal penalty to prevent transgression? Nothing. Its sole influence is, as so much natural evil, to deter from *impenitence* after transgression; for the moral governor has

authorized the conclusion, that, by repentance, the penalty shall be avoided. What the moral governor then aims at, by an absolute prohibition in the form of law with the absolute threatening of the penal evil, is *not to prevent sin*, but only to prevent *its continuance*. For aught that appears, he is as well satisfied with transgression and repentance, as with uninterrupted and perfect obedience. Is such a ruler entitled to respect; has he a right to reign? Or thus: what is there in the law to prevent on the part of every subject, a continued series of alternate acts of transgression and repentance? Nothing. As the law threatens to punish, not transgression, but only impenitence after transgression, and as transgression according to the supposition is followed by repentance, there can be no place for punishment. Let it then be supposed, that acts of transgression and of repentance occur in a series at such intervals as you please to imagine, and what shall be said of the government and the character of the lawgiver? Can he be entitled to respect, or possess the least authority, or the lowest possible qualification to rule? In such a case, how could it appear that the governor would annex an endless penalty to transgression, if he knew that it would prevent all transgression? And if this could not be known, how could it appear that he would annex such a penalty, though he knew it to be necessary to prevent universal and endless transgression without repentance, and with the complete and endless misery of his kingdom?

Without however dwelling longer on the absurdities of this principle, there is one incontrovertible fact which must exempt this part of the subject from all difficulty and doubt, viz., that sin or transgression on its first existence, is the fit object of the highest disapprobation, and therefore requires the highest degree of penal evil. Sin, or the transgression of law, is a principle of action in a moral being, and in its essential nature, is at its first existence one and the same thing which it is in its continuance. It is true, that by continuance, in certain circumstances, its strength as a principle of action may be increased, and also its ill-desert. In some circumstances, this is undeniably true. Under the reclaiming influences which they resist, evil men wax worse and worse. Placed under such influences, they are under the necessity of forming the selfish principle *de novo* with greater or less frequency, and thus greatly increase the strength of the selfish principle—their wickedness and guilt.

By continuance, it may also extend its actual desolations, and reveal to us more clearly its fell malignity; and thus its intrinsic turpitude and ill-desert may be judged by us to be greater than in its beginning. But the question now is, not whether it becomes deserving of penalty by increasing in strength, or by developing its malignant tendency to our observation in actual results. But the question is, whether sin becomes ill-deserving or deserving of penalty *by mere continuance*; or whether it would cease to be ill-deserving by being repented of? I answer, that *the mere continuance* of the same principle both in kind and degree, neither gives it its ill-desert nor increases it one iota. Sin continued, differs not from sin begun, except in the mere circumstance of continuance, which can in no respect change the nature of sin or increase its ill-desert. Sin, when it first exists, is and must be, in its nature, tendency, and every essential relation of sin, all that it ever is or ever can be. In its true nature and tendency, and in the lowest degree of strength in which it can exist in the mind, and whether it produce its appropriate results or not, it prostrates law, authority, and moral government—it destroys all happiness and produces all misery. It does not therefore become the fit object of the highest disapprobation by its continuance, nor by the impenitence of the transgressor, nor yet by any thing connected with or dependent on its continuance. It is so in its essential nature. As such an object, as demanding the expression of the moral governor's highest disapprobation in penal evil, it is, when it first exists, all that in its nature which it ever can be. The transgressor in his first act of transgression, strikes the death blow at all good, and puts his hand to the production of complete and universal misery. Then it is that the deed is committed—done in heart—requiring no continuance, no repetition, no overt acts, no results in woe, to give it its full measure of ill-desert as the transgression of law. Were the full results of one sin instantly to follow its commission—the destruction of all good, and of all the means of good, with woe unmingled, complete, universal, and, without the execution of the supposed penalty, eternal, who would not see in these results the nature and ill-desert of sin, without supposing its continuance—would not see that its nature and ill-desert could not be changed by repentance, when its work was done? Suppose now, that the execution of the supposed penalty in comparatively a few in-

stances would retrieve the evil, and cause a universe of joy, bespeaking the benevolence of its author, and lasting as eternity, to rise on these ruins, would not the execution of the penalty be demanded by benevolence; would not every voice of reason and of conscience respond, 'The judgment is righteous altogether?' But if the supposed execution of the penalty would be demanded to retrieve the evil, why is it not required to prevent it? We say that it is, as truly as a perfect moral government is demanded by the highest good which an infinite Being can produce. Sin then, as sin, does not derive its ill-desert in the lowest degree from impenitence, nor can its ill-desert be lessened by repentance. Being what it is in its essential nature, and viewed as a principle of action irrespectively of any increased strength of any actual results in evil, either natural or moral, and continuing but for a moment, it is the fit object of the highest disapprobation, and demands the highest degree of natural evil as its penalty.

Objection 2. It may be said, that as punishment can be justified only on the principle that the greatest good requires it, it would follow, that if all the subjects of a moral government should rebel, benevolence would forbid their endless punishment. If it be admitted, that *in the case supposed*, benevolence would forbid eternal punishment, it does not follow that it would forbid it in any actually existing case, nor in any case in which a benevolent being can be supposed to adopt a perfect moral government. Nor, to apply the objection to this world, and supposing all to be in a state of disobedience, does it follow, that benevolence might not inflict eternal punishment on all. It cannot be shown that the moral governor might not punish rebellion to whatever extent it may be supposed to exist in this world, and yet, by creating other worlds, produce on the whole an amount of creature happiness equal to that which would exist without the supposed punishment. The possibility of his so doing seems to be distinctly recognized in the Scriptures; and the admission of it is also important, if we would duly appreciate the mercy of God in the work of redemption. "Think not," said John the Baptist, to the unbelieving Jews, "to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." As if he had said, God can destroy you forever, and yet glorify himself by creating and blessing other

beings. This is possible truth, and as such, it fully overthrows the present objection, as applied to the endless punishment of every human being. Such a punishment of the race may be consistent with God's benevolence. If it here be asked, why then did not God actually adopt this course? I answer, not because as a benevolent being he was under the necessity of adopting another—not because he could not secure as much (I do not say he could secure more) creature happiness, by the punishment of this world and the creation of another, as by the redemption of this; but because, viewing this world as actually created—for it must be so, if we suppose it to deserve punishment—it may be true that he could himself find more happiness in blessing with redemption creatures already existent, than by creating others to be the subjects of an equal degree of happiness. He would thus derive the decisive motive to redemption from himself, and not from a greater amount of creature happiness. In this view of the subject, with what emphasis does he say, "Not for your sakes do I this, but for my own great name's sake." How rich is such mercy compared with that which benevolence, as is supposed, requires him to show to guilty beings! The Christian must admit that it is, and the infidel that it may be, consistent with God's perfect benevolence to punish a revolted world with everlasting destruction.

More can be said on this point. Whether benevolence requires the eternal punishment of the transgressors of law in any actual case or not, it is undeniable, that there cannot be a perfect moral government without it as the penalty of transgression. According to the principles already presented, every subject in this case, would be authorized and required to believe, by decisive evidence, that the moral governor does not regard the transgression of his law with the highest disapprobation. He does not punish on this principle, but plainly shows that he esteems it of less consequence that his law is transgressed, than that that penalty be inflicted on the transgressor, which is requisite to sustain his own authority as a perfect moral governor. He would that the rebel should be made less than completely and eternally miserable, rather than secure and employ the necessary means of the highest happiness of all for eternity; yea, rather than furnish so far as any evidence to the contrary is concerned, the necessary means of

preventing the absolute misery of all for eternity. He shows that he does not regard obedience to his law as the supreme good, and disobedience to his law as the supreme evil. He shows himself too kind, too indulgent to the rebel, to make him as miserable as the support of his own authority and the highest happiness of his kingdom demand. In a word, he shows himself to be truly a selfish and malignant being. And what is law, authority, or moral government in such a case, but a pretense and a mockery? To talk of a perfect moral government then, in a case in which benevolence will not allow the authority of the governor to be sustained by an endless penalty, is only to say, that a perfect moral government in such a case, is impossible; that benevolence itself forbids the necessary means of the highest happiness.

Objection 3. It is said, that it is incredible and impossible that benevolence should adopt a moral government with a legal penalty consisting in the highest degree of natural evil. I answer, that to assume the impossibility and incredibility that benevolence should adopt such a system, is wholly gratuitous and unauthorized. It cannot be shown, nor can it be rendered in the lowest degree probable, that such a system of moral government is not the necessary means of the best end which an infinitely perfect Being can accomplish. The supposition that it is, involves no contradiction or absurdity. It may not only be true, that such a system is the necessary means of such an end, but that the end is so great that the supposed penalty in its actual execution, is in the comparison insignificant, an evil scarcely to be accounted of. Great as the evil may be to the individual sufferers, it is to be estimated not simply as related to them, but as related to the great end of the system—the end which an infinite being can accomplish only by means of it. This principle is familiar to every mind, and constantly recognized by right reason as indubitable. Why are the crimes of murder and treason punished with death, and this too considered only as fatal to certain great interests of time? Is not death a most fearful evil to man, viewed as a being of time only? Why then is it made the penalty of some single acts of transgression? Because the interests which one such act destroys, the great ends of human society can be secured by no other means. Do you say, that the unmingled and endless misery of a being is an evil so immeasurably great, that it is

incredible that there should be any necessity for it as the means of good? But remember and admit, that the failure of the end which it may be necessary to secure, may be an immeasurably greater evil. If you refuse to admit this, you are not a fair reasoner. If you do admit it, then why should it be thought incredible, that the penalty of the law should be the unmingled and endless suffering of the transgressor? If the limited and comparatively inferior interests or end of an earthly kingdom, demand for their security the penalty of death, why may not the penalty under consideration be justly inflicted on him who would destroy the interests and defeat the end of an eternal kingdom. Why may not an infinite Being propose an end, the accomplishment of which shall require the infliction of the highest degree of natural evil on those who would otherwise defeat that end, who would even fill his creation with unmingled and endless woe? The sum total of penal evil actually inflicted under this system may be ten thousand times less compared with the actual good of which it is the necessary means, than the penal evil in any kingdom, state, or even family on earth compared with the good which results from it.

On this subject, if we would not be led by feeling instead of reason, we must think of THE END—the happiness to be produced—the misery to be prevented—the end worthy of an infinitely perfect Being, and which shall be a full expression and manifestation of his infinite attributes—the end which such a Being will and must accomplish! And who shall prescribe limits to this, and undertake to tell how much evil may be justifiably incurred in its accomplishment? But it will probably be said, that infinite power can dispense with the supposed penalty, and that thus its necessity is wholly superseded. I answer, that a perfect moral government is the necessary means of the end proposed; and that no degree of power can dispense with such a system, nor with any thing necessary to its perfection. Perfect benevolence must adopt the system. Power can in no respect interfere with or change its nature. Omnipotence is here under a restriction from the nature of things, the government of free moral agents. The power of an infinite Being is as truly restricted by the nature of the subject as the power of man? What can power do? It cannot secure as its proximate effect right, nor can it prevent wrong moral action. It

cannot destroy the power of moral beings to act morally wrong without destroying their nature. In the language of Dr. Dwight, "Men are beings possessed of the full power to originate any and every moral action."\* With this view of the nature of men as moral beings, it is absurd to talk of God's producing in them either right or wrong moral action by dint of power; as really so as to talk of producing thought and volition by a machine, or breaking rocks with arguments, or governing the winds by motives. I am not saying that God cannot by influences consistent with the nature of moral agency in men, in many instances, prevent wrong and secure right moral action. But I affirm, that in view of the nature of moral agency, it is impossible to prove that God could prevent sin in the best moral system. Moral agents can act morally wrong under every possible influence from God. To suppose him to prevent all wrong moral action on their part in all cases, may, for aught that can be shown to the contrary, be supposing him to do what in certain cases he cannot do, that is, that he can do in certain cases, what he cannot do. *Vide* MATT. xiii. 24.

The system of a perfect moral government now maintained is possible, is credible, though moral evil and its eternal punishment in some cases be a foreseen and actual consequent. It may be true that it is the best—the necessary and only means of the best end which an infinite Being can accomplish. It may have in his estimation more value than all the worlds and beings which he has created; the end which he can accomplish only by a perfect moral government may be so great and good, that compared with it, the eternal destruction of such a world as this, nay, of thousands of such worlds, would be only as an infinitesimal compared with infinitude. It may at least be true that it were better, that heaven and earth, the created universe, should pass away, than that one jot or tittle should pass from the law.

Do you say that this is telling what may be, that it is going off into the unknown regions of possibilities? I know it. But that is where your objection goes, and we must follow. You

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\*The same writer also says, "My actions are intuitively seen by me not to be the effects of an extraneous cause, or of something beside myself." "The changes passing in my own mind are produced by my own active powers." "We are agents possessing active powers by which we can originate changes." "Man chooses while possessed of a power to choose otherwise."—THEOLOGY, SERMONS, 24, 27.

say it is impossible that God should adopt such a system as I have described. I show you that you cannot prove it, and have therefore no right to say it. Confess the possibility of such a system, and so take back your objection and I am satisfied. My argument will then remain in unimpaired force.

I have thus in several lectures attempted to show what a perfect moral government is, dwelling more particularly and fully on the nature of its legal sanctions. In conclusion, I propose to make a few brief reflections on the subject and the manner in which it has been treated.

You must have seen that the principles which I have attempted to sustain by reason are those which belong to the Christian system. If my endeavor has been successful, I have furnished on the authority of reason a full vindication of these great principles of Christianity, and have thus in effect refuted every objection to Christianity which is derived from these principles. More particularly—

If the view now given of the nature of moral government be correct, and if it be conceded that God is the perfect moral governor of his moral creation, then a strong not to say the strongest objection of the infidel against Christianity is removed, viz., that its law, or rather the law on which this system rests, involves such a fearful penalty. Most infidel writers, Paine not excepted, have conceded and applauded the excellence of the Christian morality—they have praised the law of Christianity, but have denounced its penalty. In view of what has been said in these lectures, I ask, what excellence would pertain to this law without its penalty? Would it propose or require the best kind of action, and so far as its excellence as a rule of action should be understood, furnish strong motives to obedience? Be it so. But it would not be a law—the law of a perfect moral government; for it could possess no authority. It could not with propriety be called *a rule of action*. It would be advice merely; leaving the question of conformity to the discretion of those to whom it is given, fully authorizing them to do their own will without the least respect to that of God. Yea, promulged in the form of law, it would subvert all authority in God, disprove his goodness, and justify abhorrence of his character and contempt for his government. It would reveal not even such a God as guilt makes welcome, but a being who would fill the moral creation with terror. And

would such a law be excellent? What if it proposed right action, while it revealed such a being on the throne of the universe, while itself was known to be—not the law of truth, not the will of perfect benevolence, but a lie of infinite malignity! Call this a rule of action, law, authority, moral government! It were but the pretense, the mockery of it in the hands of an omnipotent fiend—the very patronage of iniquity, sanctioning its unrestrained perpetration, and exemplifying its horrors in the unmingled and unending miseries of the universe. Why is it that men cannot see here, what they see and know everywhere else? Who does not see and feel the power of law when administered by that supreme regard to the general good, which never wavers, never flinches, but carries it out in the full measure of its penal inflictions, whoever may be the transgressor? Were this the principle of our civil rulers, were it fully understood and known that law was in the hands of such a principle, what might and majesty it would possess! What would become of the crimes that stalk so openly and shamelessly before our eyes? And if you want an illustration of the imbecility of law contemned and fit only to be contemned, look at the too frequent use of the pardoning prerogative by the executive of our states, and at the riots, bloodshed, and murders perpetrated in anticipation of such clemency. If an armed mob in a great city, infuriate to desperation, can so impressively tell us what a law without a penalty is, why can we not learn, that a law from God without a penalty revealing the feelings and the character of a perfect Being, would be no law, worse than no law, a calamity and a curse to his moral creation? Let us then judge of the law of God as it is; judge of it with those sanctions which reveal a perfect God; judge of it in its true tendency, as the only law which is fitted to bring—as actually bringing the will of every moral creature of God into subjection to his will—then shall we see that the law of the Lord is perfect, that were God to give a law to moral beings without a penalty revealing his holiness, nay, his full abhorrence of sin, it would veil in darkness his brightest glories—would be the most fearful act of infinite malignity.

And here, I venture to say, that the main principle in the reasonings of infidels is subverted, and their stronghold is broken down. Who does not know, that the most plausible and the most successful assaults on Christianity derive their force from

the fearful, and as it is represented, the incredible nature of its sanctions? How much has been said and written on the subject, to throw Christianity beyond the boundary of human credibility! as if the supreme Lawgiver of the universe had nothing to do in his administration, but to caress the foundlings of his love, and to scatter blessings among them whether obedient or disobedient! How often are appeals made to all that is revolting in the cruelty of a tyrant; how often is this contrasted with all that is touching in the tenderness of a mother; as if the governor of the moral universe must be either a Nero or a woman! Surely a mother's tenderness, lovely as it is, does not exactly qualify her to rule a pandemonium! To resort to such appeals in argument then, is *not reasoning*. To him who knows enough to *reason at all* on the subject, there is a majesty in law, there is certainly a majesty in God's dominion which looks down with contempt on such expedients to degrade it.

But so it is. Thousands allow themselves to be misled by feeling, and to overlook without a thought, the magnitude of those interests, which for their protection employ, and will forever employ, the attributes of the Infinite Being. Indeed, if there be any case in which there can be no hope of a true verdict, it is when the question arises, what is the just penalty of transgressing the divine law, when the transgressor is the judge? We may safely say, that there is no subject within the limits of human inquiry, on which the human mind is more liable to be unduly swayed by interest and feeling, nor one on which such influence is less apt to be suspected. Argument in moral science depends much for its apparent force and conclusiveness, on the impression which it makes on the mind. Indifference to truth and error here, is in fact out of the question. In the present instance, our reasoning, instead of meeting sensibilities to welcome and receive its influence, has first to encounter the strongest tide of opposite emotion; and so feeble is its power to impress, that its failure to convince is ascribed almost of course to its intrinsic weakness and insufficiency. Though the argument should be absolutely conclusive, and should utterly baffle every attempt to detect its weakness, it would not be strange should it leave the mind unconvinced, and be itself rejected as sophistry too ingenious to be detected. Nor would it be any more surprising, should harshness of temper, or at least the want of the more tender feelings of our

nature, be imputed to the author of an argument which supports so revolting a conclusion.

All this however is unphilosophical. Reproach not the advocates of Christianity for severity of temper, in maintaining what may seem to you, gloomy or even terrific views of God's moral government. How easy is it to recriminate with at least equal plausibility! For what is more terrific than the God of Infidelity? On your scheme, all is uncertainty, darkness, terror. On ours only, is there light and hope even in well-doing. Hell itself giveth both, for it upholds the empire of righteousness.

This is a subject then, which, above all others, calls on us to protect the understanding from all the vagaries of the imagination and all the feelings of the heart. Here if anywhere, should the mind be disciplined to the use of simple intellect, and be prepared to follow the light of evidence, to give up every thing to the supremacy of argument, to adopt conclusions however unwelcome, and to make sacrifices however painful, the moment truth demands them. For truth, be it said to her eternal honor, never can require a sacrifice which our highest good does not also demand.

END OF SECTION I.

# THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

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## SECTION II.

### THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD

AS KNOWN

BY THE LIGHT OF NATURE.

#### LECTURE I.

*Thesis to be established in three leading propositions.—First, God administers a Moral Government in some sense; for, 1, men are moral beings; 2, God has given them a law.—Shown from the manifestation of the tendencies of action to good and evil.—No opposing evidence.—Perversion of a design does not disprove the reality of the design; nor the fact that such perversion was foreseen; nor that the perversion is universal.—The perversion observed may be temporary.—Tendency to wrong, not greater than to right action.—Cause of the certainty but not of the necessity of such perversion.—The only proper method of reasoning.—Conclusion.*

My object in several lectures on the subject proposed, is to establish the proposition, that—

**GOD IS ADMINISTERING A PERFECT MORAL GOVERNMENT OVER MEN.**

For this purpose I propose :

I. To show that God is administering a moral government over men in some proper import of the language.

II. To prove the equity of his administration ; and—

III. To prove his rightful authority.

In proving the first of these propositions, we shall show that God is administering a moral in distinction from a providential government. In proving the second, *i. e.*, the equity of his administration, we shall show that he has given to men the best law; that he strictly adheres to the principles of equity in its administration, and will sustain its perfect authority.

In proving the third, *i. e.*, his rightful authority, we shall

show his benevolence or absolute moral perfection. And when these things are shown, the perfection of his moral government is proved.

In the present lecture, I enter on the proof of the first of these propositions, viz.:

I. *God is administering a moral government over men in some proper import of the phrase.*

I have already defined moral government to be *the influence of authority on moral beings, exercised by a moral governor, through the medium of law.* To support the proposition now before us, it is necessary only to show *that men are moral beings, that God has given them a law, and that he enforces conformity to his law by the influence of authority.*

1. Men are moral beings; that is, they possess the powers of moral action, and are placed in the circumstances requisite for their exercise. The fact that men are moral agents, I shall here take for granted; having given what I deem sufficient proof of it in other lectures, and also because I suppose it will not be denied.

2. God has given to men a law, which is a decisive expression of a moral governor's preference of some action to its opposite.

That God has given a law to men, I argue, from the fact that he has made them moral beings; in other words, from their constitution and the circumstances of their existence.

Whatever may be the design of our constitution, and the circumstances of our being, of that design God is the author. What I claim then is, *that God in creating men moral beings, and placing them in circumstances requisite to moral action, clearly manifests his will or preference, that men should act morally right rather than morally wrong.* The proof of this position rests on this obvious and undeniable principle, that the clear manifestation of adaptation or tendency to an end in the structure or nature of any thing which is made, is decisive proof that this end was designed by the maker, provided there is no opposing evidence.

I will now state as briefly as may be, the argument from man's constitution and condition as a moral being, and then show that there is no opposing evidence.

It is then impossible in the nature of things that God should create a moral being, without placing him under a stronger

motive—a far higher inducing influence to the performance of right, than to the performance of wrong moral action. Whether a moral agent be created or not, depends on the will of God. But that right moral action is the necessary means of the highest happiness of a moral agent, is eternal truth—truth which no more depends on the will of God, than the equality of all straight lines from the center to the circumference of a circle. Right moral action is benevolent; wrong moral action is selfish. According therefore to the essential and immutable nature of things, right moral action, be the limited temporary self-sacrifice it may involve what it may, tends to secure the highest happiness of the agent, as well as that of others; and wrong moral action, afford what limited temporary enjoyment it may, tends to secure the highest misery of the agent and of others. These ideas enter into our necessary conceptions of right and wrong moral action as their essential elements. As we cannot conceive of matter without solidity and extension, no more can we conceive of right and wrong moral action, without conceiving of the one as tending to secure the highest happiness, and of the other, the highest misery of a moral being.

There is another philosophy, which maintains that the highest happiness of the individual may come into competition, and so be inconsistent with, the highest happiness of the whole, and that therefore the individual may be bound to sacrifice his own to the general good. This philosophy, endorsed as it is by great names, I regard as absurd and self-contradictory, though admitting that a moral being may be under obligation to sacrifice *much* and even all of what may be called *his own happiness*, for the sake of the general good. But there are two facts here which must not be forgotten. The one is, that there must be some motive to this voluntary sacrifice of his own happiness, for there can no more be choice without a motive than an effect without a cause, and there can no more be motive except in the form of good or happiness to the agent, than there can be motive which is not motive. To suppose a being then *voluntarily* to sacrifice *absolutely all his own happiness* for the sake of the general good, is to suppose him to act without a motive, that is, to act with a motive and without a motive at the same time, which is a contradiction and an absurdity.

The other fact will explain the mystery. This is, that what-

ever degree of the agent's *own happiness* may come into competition with the general good, and which for this reason he may be bound to sacrifice for it, still *his own happiness*, in one respect—even his own *highest* happiness—can *never* come into competition with general good. This is *the happiness of being good and doing good; the happiness of promoting the general good*, which he can never be required to sacrifice. This is not only his *own highest* happiness, but it will ever be great in proportion to the sacrifice. Nay more; just and adequate views of the nature of a moral being, and the true tendencies of action on his part, show that if perfectly benevolent, he must be perfectly blessed. To such a being, under every loss of happiness *possible* to him, there are fountains remaining, adequate to fill every capacity of happiness, even the fountains opened amid the throne of God and the Lamb. Or in the language of philosophy, such is the nature of a moral being, that perfection in character is perfection in blessedness. This is the fact which gives such peculiar grandeur and glory to a moral agent. Moral agency in its very nature, involves a power so to occupy the mind, so to bless the moral being with the right object of affection, that any loss or sacrifice of good which is possible in the case shall be accounted as nothing. Paul understood this, when he spoke of “suffering the loss of all things, and counting them as dung that he might win Christ,” “as having nothing and yet possessing all things.”

Such then is the nature of man as a moral being, that his perfection in happiness depends on the use he makes of his powers; in other words, on his moral character. And if it be not true from the very nature which God has given him as a moral being, that one kind of moral action will secure his perfection in happiness, and another produce his perfect misery, then is the eternal distinction between right and wrong action annihilated. I claim then, that the obvious and undeniable facts in the *nature* and *condition* of man as a moral being—supposing no evidence to the contrary—are the most decisive manifestations and proofs *that the will of God is, that man should always act morally right rather than morally wrong.*

Indeed it is inconceivable, on the supposition of no opposing evidence, that there should be any single source of proof so decisive as this, any so fitted to place the fact of the divine preference

of right to wrong moral action on the part of man, beyond all denial and doubt. If the design of the Maker can be discovered from that which is made, if the structure and position of an eye or a tooth show this, then do *the nature and condition* of man as a moral being, show that he is made to act morally right rather than morally wrong. It is then—on the supposition of no opposing evidence—the will of our Maker, it is the law of God, that man should always act in the exercise of the great principle of love or benevolence.

Our argument is thus far hypothetical. I proceed now to inquire—is there any opposing evidence to set aside or weaken that which has been adduced? All that can be offered is furnished in the fact of the universal perversion of moral agency on the part of man.

All that can be necessary here is to ascertain and apply the correct principle of judging in such a case. I maintain it to be this—*that the perversion of a design clearly manifested in the structure and condition of a thing, which perversion can be easily accounted for consistently with the reality of the design, is no evidence against its reality.*

To test the correctness of this principle, let us suppose a watchmaker to have made a number of watches of exquisite workmanship, foreseeing that in the wisest and best disposal of them he can make, they will be so perverted or misused as to defeat temporarily the end to which they are so perfectly adapted. Let it be further supposed, that by giving the requisite information and direction, he shows a most decided preference of the right to the wrong use of them, and with ample skill and power to repair the machinery, and thus *in a great degree* to redress the foreseen evil, he actually adopts a course of measures which insures such a result. I ask, is the supposed perversion in such a case to be traced to the will of the watchmaker? Is it not rather manifest, that the supposed perversion is a direct contravention of his preference? Do not the perfect structure of the watches, and his directions respecting them, furnish indisputable proof that in every instance he prefers the right to the wrong use of them?

On precisely the same principle of reasoning, I claim that the perversion of moral agency on the part of man, does not furnish the least opposing evidence to that given by his constitution and condition, that God prefers right moral action to

wrong. I shall hereafter attempt to show, by the best kind of moral evidence, that he will in fact repair in a great degree the evil done, having actually adopted a course of measures perfectly fitted to such an end. All however that my present purpose requires is, to say that these things *may be true*. This cannot be controverted. It is *possible* that the greatest good required exactly the present system, but not the perversion of moral agency in a single instance, under the present system—*it may be true*, that it is impossible that God should adopt the best moral system and prevent the perversion of moral agency in any greater degree than he does prevent it; it may be better, that moral agency should in every instance be rightly used rather than perverted under the present system; and of course it may be true that the Creator, notwithstanding the actual perversion of moral agency, prefers that every human being should act morally right rather than morally wrong.

If it be said that God might so have increased the tendencies to right action as to have prevented moral evil, either wholly or partially, I answer; this cannot be proved as I have already shown, and is therefore entitled to no consideration. Besides, to have altered the system in one iota, might have been to change it for the worse, and produced more sin than it would have prevented. The fact then that God did not increase the tendencies to right action, is no proof that he does not in every instance prefer right to wrong action under the system as it is.

Is it further said that the omniscient Creator foresaw the universal perversion of the moral agency, and therefore must have intended or purposed its actual existence? This is readily admitted, admitted as the only truth which can form a basis for confidence, submission and joy, in view of such an amount of evil as exists under the divine government. But I have said the perversion of moral agency *may be* in respect to divine prevention, incidental to the best system. God then may have purposed the existence of the evil, rather than not adopt the best system to which the evil may be thus incidental. But this fact would give no shadow of proof that he does not prefer right to wrong moral action under this system.

Is it still further said, that all this would be quite credible, were moral agency perverted only by an individual moral agent, but not so in view of its universal perversion by a

world? I answer, that the perversion of moral agency by a single world may sustain the same relation to its non-perversion in other worlds, which its perversion by a single individual would sustain to its non-perversion by all other individuals, even the relation of an infinitesimal to infinitude. Of course this perversion by a world affords no more proof that the Creator does not prefer right to wrong moral action in every instance, than would its perversion by a single individual.

But not to rest the argument on the hypothesis of other worlds. It is sufficient for my present purpose to say, that there *may be* a future state of existence for man, and that the present may be one of probation in relation to future allotments, even under a redemptive system. The results may show, supposing this to be the only world of sentient creatures, that the greatest good required, not indeed the perversion of moral agency rather than the right use of it under this system, but the very system under which the perversion takes place. Of course it *may be* true, as I have before shown, that God prefers the right use of moral agency to its perversion, in every instance of moral action under the present system.

It may be still further said on this point: the perfection or imperfection of a moral system is not to be decided, merely by what are or may be only its temporary results in obedience or disobedience, but by its nature, its adaptations, tendencies and probable issues. The reason is, that a moral government may be perfect, and yet result in the temporary disobedience of its subjects. Such possibility is inseparable from its nature as a moral system. It may be in a high degree imperfect, and yet result in temporary obedience; such possibility being also inseparable from its nature. Effects which are good or bad, and which are connected with their causes by a physical necessity, may be the just criteria of the nature of their causes. It is not so however in respect to the supposed results of a system of moral government.

Temporary obedience merely, is no proof of the perfection of a system of moral government, nor is temporary disobedience proof of its imperfection; for such obedience may exist under an imperfect, and such disobedience under a perfect system of moral government. If therefore, from our knowledge of the system itself—its law, its subjects, its author, his provi-

dence or conduct toward his subjects—we have no means of forming a judgment respecting the tendencies and final issues of the system, then plainly we have no sufficient data for any conclusion respecting its perfection. It is indeed quite supposable, that such premises should exist in the case, as not only to warrant, but to demand a conclusion. Be this however as it may, and momentous as the question is, what may prove in the end under a moral government, to be merely temporary results in obedience or disobedience, are an utterly insufficient basis for any conclusion respecting its perfection. If these are the only sources of evidence on the question, then there is none. All that we can say is, the system may be perfect and it may not be. And yet philosophers have derived their principal, not to say their sole objection against the perfection of God's government and God's character, and in this way against his revelation and against all religion, from the existence of moral evil in the world. But who of them all knows whereof he affirms? Who in his ignorance, is certain that any degree of moral evil in this world is inconsistent with such issues of the system in a future state, as shall show, in brightest manifestation, the perfection of the system and the character of its Author?

But it may here be said, that there is a greater tendency, under the present system, to wrong than to right moral action on the part of all men, and that the author of the system designed that it should be so. That the alleged greater tendency\* exists under the present system is denied, as involving an absolute impossibility in the nature of things. The objection concedes that men are capable of moral action, and are of course *moral* beings. But a moral being is one whose highest happiness depends, and who knows that it does, on acting morally right. There can be no tendency to moral action in a moral being, except ultimately to obtain happiness by acting; and the greater the happiness known by the agent to depend on one kind of moral action, the greater the tendency to that action. When he knows as a moral agent must, that his highest happiness depends on his acting morally right, there is of

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\* *Tendency* is that in the nature of an antecedent in a sequence which will give the certainty of the consequent, provided there is not that in another antecedent which will give the certainty of the opposite.

course a greater tendency in his case to act morally right, than to act morally wrong. To suppose a greater tendency in his case to act morally wrong than morally right, is to suppose that his highest happiness depends, and he knows it, on his acting morally wrong, when his highest happiness does not depend on his so acting, and when he knows that it does not—which is a twofold contradiction, and an absolute impossibility in the nature of things. I am not saying, that a moral being, with that knowledge which is necessary to constitute him such, may not act morally wrong. But I maintain that if he does, he so acts, having the knowledge that his highest happiness consists in acting morally right; and that therefore in so doing, he does not act according to the greater tendency. Nor am I saying, that when a moral agent acts morally wrong, there is not a previous certainty of his so doing; nor that there is not a cause, ground, or reason of such previous certainty. But I maintain that there is nothing in these, which, when speaking reflectively for the purposes of philosophic truth, can be properly called a greater tendency to wrong than right moral action—provided any thing more be meant by the language, than that there is that in the nature of the motive—which in distinction from power is the cause of the wrong moral act—compared with the motive to right moral action, that gives the certainty of the wrong instead of the right moral action. I have no occasion to say, that the phrase may not be *properly*, or according to common usage, applied to the cause of wrong moral action in a further meaning than that now specified, nor do I admit that it can be. It seems to me to be applied, in a further meaning, by none but philosophers, and only by that class of philosophers and divines who maintain the doctrine of necessity as opposed to moral liberty, and to be therefore *not a proper*, but a mere *sectarian or partisan* usage.\* Granting however that common usage sanctions the *propriety* of speaking of a stronger tendency to wrong than to right moral action, still,

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\* I know of no attempt to justify such language as "stronger motive," "strongest motive," "greater power or strength of motive," "greater or stronger tendency of motive," to morally wrong than to morally right acts of will, as the language of popular or common usage. The popular language of the Scriptures is directly and abundantly the contrary. It would seem that divines, like President Edwards, who so arbitrarily and unwarrantably use such language, should well consider this topic as presented in the Scriptures.

as we have before shown, it is in every such case, the language of *appearance*, and in its actual meaning when thus employed, *entirely false*. And what if usage sanctions the propriety of the language of appearance, in its false meaning in certain cases and for certain purposes, does this show that it is to be employed for scientific uses? What if, for the ordinary purposes of life, it is proper to speak of the sun as rising and setting; is the astronomer to adopt this language for the purposes of science?

But it may be asked—if there are two opposing tendencies and one prevails over the other, is not the former a greater or stronger tendency than the latter? I answer, that while this may be said with propriety and with truth in respect to physical or natural phenomena, it cannot in the same meaning be said respecting moral phenomena. In the one case, the opposing tendencies result from the opposing *powers* of opposing antecedents, as when we speak of the greater force or stronger arm prevailing over the weaker. But in respect to the antecedents of moral phenomena or acts of will, there is no such conflict of opposing powers; and to speak as if there were, is at best to use the language of appearance which in its actual meaning is known to be false. And further, it may be *truly* and *properly* said, that there is a greater or stronger tendency on the part of every moral being to morally right than to morally wrong action. If it be asked in what sense, I answer—not in that in which, as we have seen, the language would be known to be false, but in a very different meaning, viz.: to denote the fact, that in the nature and circumstances of a moral being, as these are actually known to us on *a priori* grounds, and known as *moral causes* merely, there is more adaptation or fitness to secure right than wrong moral action. While no one can doubt the propriety of using the language in this application, it cannot be supposed to be so used, except as the language of appearance, and surely not to denote a ground of *the certainty* of right moral action. So true is it in the proper use of language, that there is a greater tendency to right than to wrong moral action on the part of moral beings in the sense now explained, that, judging on *a priori* ground, there is far more reason for the conclusion that they will act morally right, than that they will act morally wrong; and that wrong moral action on their part, in view of the tend-

ency to right moral action, is cause for universal astonishment as utterly irrational.

But it will be further asked, how is this if we judge *a posteriori*—how is it when we see a whole race of moral beings uniformly acting morally wrong instead of morally right? Can we in view of such a fact, say that there is not a greater tendency in their case to act morally wrong than morally right? I answer; first, that without denying the *propriety* of saying that there is a greater or stronger tendency to wrong moral action than to its opposite on the part of men, inasmuch as the *false* language of appearance is often *proper*, I affirm that the only *truth* in the case to which such language can respect, is that there is a ground or reason of the *certainty* of wrong moral action. There can be no evidence from the universal phenomenon of wrong moral action, of a greater tendency to such action in the meaning in which such language may now be supposed to be *properly* used. There may be and in my view there is, a ground or reason for the certainty of wrong moral action, which fact in the false and harmless language of appearance is mistaken for a stronger tendency to wrong moral action. But there can be no truth in the actual meaning of this language of appearance thus employed. The tendency to right and to wrong moral action in every moral being implies no conflict between opposing *powers* or influences in which the one overcomes the other as being the superior or greater power or influence. The only power in the case is THE WILL, which is equally adequate to either act. Power or influence as we have shown, cannot be predicated of motive or of any thing which determines the will. Of course no greater tendency which depends on such power or influence can be truly inferred or predicated of it. There is the same possibility, so far as possibility depends *on power*, to either act instead of the other. In view of this known power and possibility as given by this power, neither the fact of right nor of wrong moral action, nor the uniformity of either, can be the least evidence of a greater tendency to one than to the other, which depends on power or influence. The only sense in which it can be said that there is a greater tendency to right than to wrong moral action on the part of men, implies nothing which can with truth be called *greater power* or influence to secure right than wrong moral action, which also gives *the certainty*

of right moral action. Still less can it be supposed that what may be called the less tendency to wrong moral action, should involve any thing in its nature which makes it certain. We are indeed, in view of the fact of wrong moral action on the part of men, obliged to admit some ground or reason of the certainty of such action with power to the contrary. But this is not and cannot be a greater tendency to such action, but is a ground or reason of its certainty, notwithstanding a greater tendency as above explained to right moral action. Such is always the fact when the mind knowingly chooses the inferior good. If it be asked, what gives this certainty of the wrong moral action, we may or may not be able to assign some one antecedent as the cause, ground or reason of this certainty in all cases. It may be the nearness of the inferior good, or it may be the peculiar vividness of the mind's view of it, or it may be any one of many other possible circumstances. Nor is it in the lowest degree incredible, that the ground or reason of this certainty should vary in different cases, and that no common characteristic of such antecedents can be affirmed, except that they give the certainty of wrong moral action. Be these things as they may, still the mind in every moral choice, *knows* in the most absolute manner in which truth can be known, that its own highest happiness depends on choosing morally right. Otherwise the choice can have no moral character. I only ask, can reasoning from physical tendencies set aside this truth of *absolute knowledge*, that the greater is the happiness known to depend on an act of choice, the greater the tendency to that act? If not, then instead of a greater tendency to wrong than to right, there is a greater tendency to right than to wrong moral action, under the present system.

But it may be said, still there is a cause, ground or reason of the certainty of wrong moral action on the part of all men under the present system. This is readily admitted. But this cause, ground or reason of the mere *certainty* of wrong moral action giving no *necessity* for it, but implying power to the contrary, *may* in respect to divine prevention, be incidental to the best moral system. Or thus, the present system notwithstanding this metaphysical imperfection, *may be* not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator. This cause, ground or reason of the certainty of wrong moral action may be said to be a tendency to such action. Though it

be less than that to the opposite, still it may be a tendency which gives the certainty of wrong action. Some degree of tendency to wrong action is unavoidable in a moral system; and while if it were greater to wrong than to right, it would be flagrantly inconsistent with a moral system, yet that there should be that which gives the certainty of wrong moral action, is not necessarily inconsistent with the Creator's preference of right to wrong moral action under the present system. He may purpose this cause of the certainty of wrong moral action, not as good in itself or as the means of good, but solely as an evil incidental in the very nature of things to the best possible system. He may prefer the existence of this evil and its consequent in wrong moral action, so far as the latter exists, to the non-existence of the best system and for no other reason. But this is no proof, not the lowest degree of probable evidence, that he prefers wrong to right moral action in a single instance under the present system. On the contrary, according to the present supposition of possible truth, the proof is decisive, that he would prevent this tendency which results in wrong moral action, were it possible to him to do so and yet adopt or not perpetuate the system, that he permits it only as a metaphysical evil inseparable by his power from the best system, and that therefore while he adopts the best system, he prefers in every instance right to wrong moral action under the present system. Nor is this all. Since on the present supposition he prefers the existence of this tendency to wrong moral action solely to the non-existence of the best system, he does not prefer it to a tendency that should give the certainty of right moral action. On the contrary, this tendency to wrong moral action must be a tendency to that which when compared with right moral action, is contrary to his will. Of course his whole will must be opposed to this tendency to wrong moral action, compared with a tendency to right moral action in its stead. The very tendency therefore, alleged as proof that he prefers wrong to right moral action, implies and proves on the present supposition his preference of right to wrong moral action under the present system. And what sort of proof is that of his preference of wrong to right moral action, which for any thing which can be shown to the contrary, may be a decisive proof of the opposite preference.

The grand and only objection to our present position, derived

from the tendency to moral evil in the world, and its existence and prevalence, is then without the least plausibility.

Here then I appeal to the great fact on which our present argument rests, viz.: that God has created men moral beings, thus adapting their nature to right moral action, and thus, from the necessity of their nature as moral beings, causing tendencies to right moral action, which clearly manifest his will or preference that they should, in every instance, act morally right. So far as tendencies can have any influence or bearing on the question of what kind of moral action he prefers, the tendencies to right moral action stand forth in the nature and circumstances of the beings, as the great and only fact to be taken into consideration, when the question is, what is his will in respect to the moral conduct of his moral creatures? This fact is proof, uncounteracted by the least opposing evidence, and therefore unequivocal and decisive, that God prefers right to wrong moral action. Analyze and scrutinize the true nature and tendencies of things as we may, and we must see in what God has done in respect to right and wrong moral action, adaptation, fitness, tendency to one end, and to one end only—to right moral action—insomuch that in this contemplation of a moral agent, we wonder that he should ever do wrong. We count all wrong-doing a disorder, and a violence done to the nature and laws of a moral economy. It is eternal necessary truth, that a moral agent is a being so constituted and so circumstanced, that virtue, perfect moral excellence, is the sure and only means of his highest and perfect happiness. All that can be called adaptation, fitness or tendency in the nature and condition of moral beings, is a greater, higher adaptation, fitness or tendency to right moral action than to wrong. The evidence in the case all goes to prove, that the Creator of such beings prefers right to wrong moral action on their part. This will of God stands forth in the nature of man as a moral being in as clear and bright manifestation, as had this been a world of universal obedience to that will. The question of the Creator's preference of right to wrong moral action is not touched at all by the results whether in obedience or disobedience. The system itself so far as any thing appears to the contrary, is not only better than none, but, notwithstanding the evil, is the best which a perfect God could adopt. The question therefore concerning his preference of right to wrong moral action,

under this best system, is one which in the very nature of the case, is to be decided in view of its adaptations and tendencies. If the system when thus judged of, is not only better than none, but the best conceivable for aught we know or can say to the contrary, then it is proof decisive, viewed in its true nature and tendency, that its Author prefers right to wrong moral action. If under this same system there had been universal obedience, it would have added nothing to the evidence of his preference, for he would have done no more to secure obedience than he has now done. The proof on this supposition, would be furnished, not by the obedience of the subjects, but solely by the nature of the system; so that if the system does not prove his preference without, it could not prove it with obedience. So likewise, universal disobedience lessens not this evidence, for he does nothing less to secure obedience than had universal obedience been the result. If then the system with universal disobedience, does not prove his preference, it could not prove it with universal obedience, for the system would be the same on either supposition.

Such is undeniably the true and only legitimate mode of reasoning on this subject. The question is not, what subjects do; but what has the moral governor done? It is not what is the conduct of subjects under the system, but what is the system under which they act? Take an example. Let it be once ascertained that a father has done all that wisdom and goodness dictate to secure the obedience of his children, that the system of influence is perfect, or which is the same thing in the argument, that there is no proof that wisdom and goodness required him to do any thing more than he has done for the purpose, or that to have done any thing more or less would not have been for the worse instead of the better; and his preference of obedience to disobedience is alike conspicuous and undeniable, whether his children obey or disobey. Here then I ask, what other than a moral system, and what moral system better than the present, could God in his infinite wisdom and goodness have chosen, supposing him to be infinitely good? Could he have adopted a system of moral government without creating free moral agents to be governed by the laws of such a jurisdiction? Could he have created moral beings without giving them power to obey or disobey under that system, be it what it might? And now when they act wrong under such a

system of influence, which *for aught that can be shown to the contrary*, is the best fitted to secure their obedience, is their wrong doing to be alleged as proof that he prefers it to their right doing? In an analogous case of human government parental or civil, would disobedience impart the slightest shade of obscurity to the will of the parent or the legislator? Would not a similar system of adaptations and influences be as decisive of a father's preference of obedience to disobedience as had uniform obedience been the actual result? Why then is it not so in respect to God? Why should we not be as charitable in our judgment of our Maker as of a fellow being? Is there no possible case in which law can be transgressed without proving the insincerity of the lawgiver? If so, then the transgression of law is a solecism and a contradiction, for there can be no law when there is no sincerity in a lawgiver. If then we say, that because God is omnipotent, he can secure obedience in every instance, and therefore if he does not, it must be because he prefers disobedience to obedience in that instance, then God cannot give a law—he cannot sincerely prefer obedience to disobedience in any case in which the latter occurs. There is no alternative but this. Either he can prevent all sin in the case or he cannot. If he cannot, then he may be sincere in the prohibition of it in his law. But if he can and does not, he cannot be sincere in its prohibition in any case in which sin takes place. Disobedience in the subject is decisive proof of insincerity in the lawgiver, and of course that there is no law. But if there is a possible or conceivable case, in which the transgression of a law from God should exist without proving his insincerity, *i. e.*, consistently with his real preference of obedience to disobedience, what is this possible case, except that which we have proved to be real? Were God the friend and patron of iniquity, would he have so formed and ordered all the adaptations and tendencies to righteousness, that the soul of man should find joy unmingled and perfect only in the practice of it? Has God so formed man, even in his own image, that he never can, and knows that he never can be happy, but in the consciousness of moral excellence, that he can secure in the highest measure the gratification of every part of his sentient nature, only as he spurns every sensual excess; that he never can feel himself truly ennobled, but by the high resolve of virtuous doings, that he can never rise to his true grandeur and godlike elevation,

only as he gives up himself, his passions and appetites, to the control of perfect moral principle—what other conclusion can be drawn from such premises, than that the Being who formed us, loves the virtue that thus exalts, adorns and blesses his creatures, and hates the vice that degrades, deforms and ruins them? Surely the design of the Creator is conspicuous in this universal and undeniable tendency of things. I decide not here that he loves virtue for its own sake, or whether his preference of virtue to vice is a benevolent or a selfish preference, but only that he has this preference. To deny it, is to do violence to the most incontrovertible of all principles—it is to maintain that a perfect adaptation to an end is no evidence that the end is designed, or that the best *kind* of evidence that God can furnish, is no evidence at all. The most august fact in the creation of God, the moral constitution of moral beings, is divested of all significance in reasoning, and the author of that constitution of the high character of an intelligent and designing Creator. Surely if the sun is placed in the heavens to illumine and warm the earth, if the rain falls to water it and to cause it to bring forth food for man and beast, if food and drink are formed to nourish and refresh our bodies, then is the mind of man created to be conformed to the law of benevolent action. This is the will—this is the law of God. It comes to us in the very nature and structure of the mind—it is given us in the actual cognitions of the inner man, in the knowledge of ourselves, and therefore in a manner not less distinct nor less impressive, than were it sent in thunders from his throne.

In conclusion I remark, that the question we have now discussed is one of the deepest concern. There is an Infinite Being, who has given existence to man, and made him a moral being. It is the will of his Great Creator that he should act either morally right or morally wrong. On the latter supposition, what is this Infinite Being? He is plainly the most appalling object that ever terrified a phrenzied imagination. You cannot conceive of another so fitted to overwhelm with terror and dismay; an Infinite Being preferring wrong to right moral action! the Great God the friend and patron of iniquity! What ground for hope, for confidence, for joy, could remain under his dominion? Who could pray, or praise, or love, or rejoice? Whose hopes would not perish, whose heart would not break, whose spirit would not sink and die in anguish?

Yet men, to defend their schemes of faith, talk of a benevolent God, who on the whole prefers vice to virtue—sin to holiness! What proof then that every creature of his power, formed in his image, will not become a fiend, and his moral universe a pandemonium? Dream of any thing else, and enjoy it as you may, but dream not, for consolation's sake, of a benevolent God who is the minister of sin! Of all the absurdities that ever disgraced Deism or Universalism, or any other system of faith, that which combines the character of the perfect God and a perfect Devil in one being is the most monstrous.

Shall we then adopt the other supposition? Then there is an Infinite Being, who has given a law to man—whose will it is, that man should always act morally right rather than morally wrong. This Being can make his creature, man, supremely happy or supremely miserable, as he obeys or disobeys his will. What will he do in fact? To impute to him the imbecility of mutable purposes—to suppose the want of all purpose in the exercise and products of his infinite attributes, or an utter indifference to the accomplishment of them, we cannot. If his designs are not benignant, they are at least such in respect to vastness of comprehension, strength of decision, and grandeur of object, as to exempt their author from contempt; they are such as accord with the infinitude of his natural attributes. He may, for aught we now say, be a benevolent, or he may be a malignant Being. But having infinite power and knowledge, he will not so act as to incur the contempt of his intelligent creation. His designs and doings, in their nature and results, will be great, like their author. They will be such, that human reason cannot look on the reality and make light of it. What then is it for man to know that he is absolutely in the power of such a Being, and that he has always crossed his will!—done what he could to defeat the design of his Creator in giving him existence!! And yet who is the man that has not done it? There is no such man. What then are our prospects? Is death the end of all? That cannot be proved. What then is to be the issue of God's great design in creating man a moral being, the most exalted in kind which he can create? Will it be abandoned in indifference or in fickleness? Will the great design of all his works be relinquished as impracticable by an Omniscient and Almighty Creator? Will it prove to be a plan, for entering on which there were no reasons,

or for abandoning which new ones will occur? Will this great design of God toward men, which stands forth first, and brightest, and greatest among them all, come to naught? Will death arrest the whole moral economy of God, and bring on it failure and defeat? I do not say here that it will not. But if it is rational in some cases *to hope*, is it not as rational also to fear? Were your life, your every interest, thus in the hands of a mysterious stranger of your own species, whose will you had always intentionally thwarted, would you not rationally fear to meet him? And when that stranger is your Creator, the Infinite Being who has made you to obey his will, and you have disobeyed it, have you no concern to know the issues of the design of your creation? Is there to be no full and final consummation of this moral economy? Are your wishes, hopes, fancies, dreams, good evidence that the great question between God and his moral creation will go unsettled, and terminate in insignificant and degrading mockery? Or, have you good reason to expect that you shall one day encounter the displeasure of one whom you have so much displeased? Can the will of any being—can the will of God be crossed, even that will on which the end of his creation depends, and he not be displeased? When you think of the violence done to your own moral nature, and the practical defiance of the known will of the Being that made you; when you listen to that voice of remonstrance and of warning from within which you cannot silence, and to those distinct and impressive whisperings of self-condemnation which you cannot mistake, do you not know that there is an account between yourself and your Maker yet unadjusted? Can you feel that all is safe? In spite of yourselves, of all your wishes and your hopes, do you not fear a retributive hour—do you not expect to meet an avenging God?

## LECTURE II.

8. First leading proposition continued.—God enforces conformity to his law by authority.—(a) He assumes the right to give a law.—(b) He dispenses good and evil as powerful inducements;—for good and evil are the proper effects of right and wrong action;—as self-complacency and remorse are enjoyed and suffered; reflection can be avoided only in part;—(c) The providence of God in other ways works against evil and for good by discipline, restraint, sickness, disappointment, death.—Forebodings of evil after death.

In support of the proposition, *that God is administering a moral government over men in some import of the language, I have adduced the facts—*

1. *That men are moral beings.*

2. *That God has given them a law or rule of action.*

I now proceed to show as I proposed—

3. That he enforces conformity to this law by the influence of authority.

By this I do not intend to decide whether he does or does not evince *the equity* of his administration and his *rightful* authority. It is common to speak of the authority of a parent or of a civil ruler, notwithstanding the manifest imperfections in the administration of his government. In such a case, we mean that he assumes and exercises the right to give law or prescribe a rule of action to others, and treats them in many respects, as if this right truly and properly belonged to him. He does so particularly by showing that he can dispense good and evil, and that it is his purpose to do so in such a manner as to create a powerful motive—a good and sufficient reason for doing his will *because it is his will*; in other words, for submitting to it without further inquiry, as the ultimate standard, the true and decisive rule of duty.

It is in this general and somewhat indefinite sense, that I now speak of God as enforcing conformity to his will by the influence of authority. As the parent, whatever imperfections and even inconsistencies may mar the government which he exercises over his children, may still be said to govern by authority, in like manner God governs men. That more than this is true, I shall attempt to show hereafter. This is all that I maintain at present, it being necessary to show that God is administering

a moral government over men as distinguished from any other, before I attempt to prove the perfection of his moral government.

I remark, then—

In the first place, *that God assumes and exercises the right of giving a law or of prescribing a rule of action to men.* We have already shown in the preceding lecture, that God has clearly manifested his will to men in respect to their moral conduct by giving them a rule of action. This is in its own nature an act of sovereign prerogative—an assumption and exercise of the right to govern. The nature of virtue, of right moral action is not a creation, dependent on and coming forth from the divine will. That does not make it right though it may prove it to be so—in other words, it is not right because he wills it, but he wills it because it is right. But the nature of man is a creation, making manifest the design of his Creator in giving him existence. God as the author of man's nature and condition, has placed him under the necessity of acting morally right to secure his own well-being. He has, etymologically speaking, bound him by the cords of this necessity, that is in common language, placed him under a *moral obligation* to act morally right. In so doing God claims his conformity to the rule of right action. This God does not by compact, not by permission or consent—but in the exercise of his own supreme right or sovereign prerogative. Thus then the infinite Being who made us, assumes the relation of a governor over us by law, thus taking the position of claiming submission to his will, on the ground that he has a right to it. I am not saying that he has this right (this may appear hereafter); but that he assumes it in the very act of giving a law, and that this assumption is itself and by itself, a clear and convincing intimation that he will vindicate and sustain this right, if not perfectly, to that degree which shall entitle it to respect.

No man can think of the greatness of God, how entirely he has the happiness of man at his own disposal—how clearly he has manifested his will respecting human conduct, and especially, how worthy of such a Being is the august relation of a perfect moral governor, without feeling a peculiar influence, an absolute and imperious necessity urging him to unqualified submission to his will.

There is a reason for this. Nothing is more certain than *the*

*execution of will*, to the extent of the agent's power. On this well known principle it is, that no human being, with the knowledge of God's will respecting his conduct, can contravene it and reflect on what he has done, without the apprehension of some retributive evil, nor perform it without anticipating some expression of his favor. How plainly is this almost instinctive feeling seen in children, nay in friends, neighbors—in all relations, that of utter strangers not excepted. To imagine that men should regard it otherwise in respect to God, is to suppose them ignorant of the great law of voluntary action—the law which connects *with will the doing of what is willed*, and the entire suspension of this law in a Being who is Almighty. Who can believe that God would be pleased with the conduct of creatures who are formed in his own image, and make no expression of his pleasure in good conferred, and be displeased with their conduct, and express no displeasure in evil inflicted? Can the infinite Being show, in the very nature of men, the end for which he made them, viz., right moral action, that he values the end as all that gives importance to their being, and do nothing which is in any respect fitted to secure the accomplishment, and to prevent the frustration of his will? Why else does he assume and exercise the right to give law? Why appear before his rational and moral creation in the exercise of such prerogative? Why has he entered upon this moral economy, if it is to be abandoned as a disgraceful mockery in the view of his moral creation? Is he too weak to maintain and vindicate the high prerogative he has assumed? This will not be pretended. Will his heart fail him—will he, in the tenderness of his relittings, sink all that is venerable and awful in the character of a lawgiver and judge, in the weakness of parental indulgence; and so consent in the issue to expose himself to the ridicule, the contempt, and the defiance of a mere pretender to authority? Is God to stand before his moral creation, in the assumption of the high prerogative of its sovereign king, and yet in the mere pageantry of one from whom obedience has nothing to hope, and transgression nothing to fear? What an absurdity! Shall God give a law, and leave it unsanctioned by good and evil? Become a lawgiver, but not a judge? Shall his law be distinctly promulged, being written on every heart, and yet no judgment and no retribution follow? No. The mere giving of a law by our Maker

is proof that we live under a retributive economy. Law bespeaks a judge. It tells of a throne in heaven, occupied by a living, reigning monarch, who takes judicial cognizance of the conduct of his creatures, and executes legal sanctions as they obey or disobey his will.

In the second place, *God so dispenses good and evil to men in this world*, as to create a powerful inducement to do his will because it is his will. By this I mean, that God so dispenses good and evil to men in this world as to influence them to right moral action, not simply by the appropriate tendencies and consequences of actions, but also by the certainty of happiness or misery, as they obey or disobey. The performance or non-performance of an action, in view of its appropriate tendencies and consequences, is one thing. But to perform an action, because by so doing I shall please, and by not performing it shall displease another and a superior being on whom my happiness may or must greatly depend, is quite another thing. The former I might do, were there no superior being to be pleased or displeased with my conduct. The latter implies a direct regard to the will of another; because he can, and, as I have reason to believe, will dispose of my happiness or misery according to my actions. To be governed by this is to act from the influence of authority. What I now claim is, that God dispenses good and evil to men in this world in order to create this influence; *i. e.*, so that we have reason to believe, that by right moral action we shall secure his favor, with its appropriate expressions in good conferred, and by wrong moral action shall incur his displeasure, with its appropriate expressions in evil inflicted. I am not now saying what degree of good and of evil we are to expect from obedience and disobedience; but that we are led by the actual providence of God to expect good and evil as the consequences of right and wrong action, in such a degree as to make it for our true interest to please him.

I remark then, that amid all the seeming mystery connected with the distribution of good and evil in this world, there is one fact too palpable to be denied, *viz.*: so far as good and evil, happiness and misery, are seen to depend on the moral conduct of man, (and they are seen to depend on it to a great extent) all *that* good is the effect of virtue, and all that evil is the effect of vice. I know indeed that it is maintained by some, that vice often produces more happiness than virtue would

produce in its stead. This I utterly deny. In some cases, greater good appears to follow vice, than we in our short-sightedness can see would follow virtue in its stead. This, be it remembered, is the estimate of our ignorance, and no proof of the fact alleged. Aside then from the groundless nature of this assumption, there is another equally so, viz., that the good which follows vice is its direct and appropriate effect. For in what case is the supposed greater good, which is said to follow, seen and known to be its true and appropriate effect? This is absolutely impossible in the nature of things. Vice consists simply in a selfish or malignant intention, in which the mind proposes to sacrifice both its own and also the greater good of others to the less. The sole tendency of this state of mind is to produce such a result. At the same time, the known tendency of virtue is to produce the greatest good, both to others and to the agent. How then can vice be the true and proper cause of greater good than virtue? How can it be the cause of that which it has no tendency to produce, and when virtue is known to be the only true and proper cause of the greatest good, in all cases? This can never be till the nature of things is changed, and virtue becomes vice, and vice virtue.

Nor is this all. Whatever good may *follow* a vicious or wicked action, of that good, the vice or wickedness of the action is not *the true and proper cause*. I readily admit that vice may, in one sense of the language, be said to be *the means*, and even *the cause* of good, viz., *it may be followed with good*. In this sense, we may properly speak of the pleasures of sin. I also admit, that in all voluntary action of that kind in which man aims to obtain any good, there is a tendency to secure or produce it, and of course that this is true of all voluntary sinful action. But then it is to be remembered that it is true of it only as voluntary, and not *as sinful*. Bishop Butler has made this important distinction between actions and that quality which constitutes them virtuous or vicious. He says, "An action, by which any natural passion is gratified, or fortune acquired, procures delight or advantage, abstracted from all consideration of the *morality* of such action; consequently the pleasure or advantage in this case is gained by the action itself, not by the morality, the virtuousness or viciousness of the action, though it be perhaps virtuous or vicious. Thus to say, such an action or course of behavior procured such pleasure

or advantage, or brought such inconvenience or pain, is quite a different thing from saying that such good or bad effect was owing to the virtue or vice of such action or behavior. In one case, an action abstracted from all moral consideration produced its effect. In the other case—for it will appear that there are such cases—the morality of the action, the action under a moral consideration, *i. e.*, the virtuousness or the viciousness of the action, produced the effect.” (ANALOGY, P. I. chap. 3.) To say then that an action which is vicious produces good, is a very different thing from saying that vice, as such, produces good, or that vice, in its own proper nature and tendency, produces or is the cause of good.

Still further; a vicious action which is said to produce good, is complex, consisting of three elements, *viz.*: the selfish preference, which is the governing purpose of the mind, the specific volition to perform the requisite external action, and the external action itself. In strict accuracy of conception, the vice is exclusively predicable of the selfish principle, and in no degree of the two other elements of the action. If now we look at the true nature and tendency of this selfish purpose, and judge of it in relation to its appropriate effect on the mind, and as wholly uncounteracted by any opposing cause, what is it? Plainly, its tendency is to act on the conscience in instant and overwhelming remorse, and thus to prevent the overt act which is the true and proper cause of the proposed good, and so either to prevent the acquisition or enjoyment of the good. It is only in counteracting this tendency of the selfish principle by at once searing and hardening conscience into a state of insensibility, that the pleasure aimed at can be experienced. Is it then the nature and tendency of this selfish principle to produce happiness in the human mind, when its only tendency, uncounteracted, is to overwhelm it in the instant agonies of remorse? The same remarks, *mutatis mutandis*, apply to virtue. All the good or happiness then which *follows* vice, and in this sense is said to be produced by it, is known to result from something else than vice as its true and proper cause; and all the evil that follows virtue, is known to result from something else than virtue as its true and proper cause.\* So that the true tendency of virtue, uncounteracted by opposing

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\* *Vide* LECTURE VII.

causes to produce happiness and nothing but happiness, both to the agent and to others; and the tendency of vice uncounteracted by opposing causes to produce opposite results, are never in the providence of God in the least obscured by the good or evil which may ensue. It follows therefore, that so far as happiness and misery in this world can be traced to the moral conduct of men as their true and proper cause, all *that* good is, in the providence of God, the proper effect of virtue, and all that evil the effect of vice. I speak not here of that happiness and misery in the world, which are not the direct and proper effects of virtue and vice, but of those which are. Of all this I say, the happiness is exclusively the effect of right, and the misery of wrong moral action. Why then is this? What is the lesson to be learned from this method of God's providence? What is it, but that God is pleased with virtue and displeased with vice? What is it, but that if we would secure the favor and avoid the displeasure of God, so far as these depend on our conduct; and if we would hope to secure good and avoid evil, as these depend on his feelings toward us, we must perform right and avoid wrong moral action? Surely, no rational mind can fail to value the approbation and deprecate the disapprobation of that great Being who holds the welfare of his creatures entirely at his own disposal, as they shall obey or disobey his will. But how, in view of the laws of his providence, which are as undeviating as the ordinances of heaven—how, except by right action, can we hope or feel the least security that we shall obtain his favor and its blessings, or avoid his displeasure with its evils? How powerful then the persuasive to virtue, as the only kind of moral action by which we can hope for the approval of an infinite Being; and how powerful the dissuasive from vice, as that by which we must expect to incur his displeasure. In other words, how great the motive to do the will of God, because it is his will.

This reasoning will acquire still greater force, if we consider more particularly the appropriate results of right and wrong moral action in self-complacency and remorse. These results, with the delightful anticipations of the one and the painful forebodings of the other, are, in every just estimate of the good and evil of human life, of the highest moment to man. And yet how easily, by different providential arrangements, might

the satisfaction we feel in right, and the remorse we feel for wrong action, be prevented. Indeed, it is quite conceivable that these consequences should be so prevented, by the providence of God, as to show on his part an indifference to moral conduct, or even a preference of wrong to right action. Why then is it—for the fact is undeniable—that good men feel that self-approbation, with its sustaining tranquillity and cheering anticipations, which they value above all earthly enjoyments? They are, at best, imperfect in moral character—they have acted the part of rebels against God. How easily then might their offended Sovereign so order their condition as to fill and overwhelm them with remorse for the past, and with despair for the future? What then are the joyful hope and triumphant anticipations of the good man, but the most decisive indications and proofs, furnished by the providence of God, of his friendship and favor? What is this, but God manifesting himself as the friend and patron of virtue, inviting and alluring man to do his will, by giving a present reward to even imperfect obedience.

On the other hand, why does not God conceal all displeasure toward the workers of iniquity? That excessive tenderness which some sentimental theologians are so fond of ascribing to the Deity, is wont in earthly parents to be very cautious on this point—to be at great pains to hide all displeasure, and to prevent all remorse for offences. Such however is not the method of God in his providence. Instead of being designed for this purpose, his providential arrangements are peculiarly adapted to opposite results. So much so, that it is not possible for men to avoid the full measure of remorse for their sins without much effort—without surmounting great obstacles—without doing palpable violence to the most obvious tendencies. God in his providence, as it were, forces this remorse upon them; and in such a manner and in so many ways, that his purpose, that they shall feel it and regard it as an expression of his displeasure for their conduct, becomes conspicuous.

The confinement of the criminal in his solitary dungeon with its inevitable results in reflection and self-reproach, is not more expressive of its design than the providence of God, in securing to such an extent this species of mental suffering in the bosoms of the guilty, is of his purpose to make manifest his displeasure toward them. Who, in the remorse and painful forebodings

of conscious guilt, does not feel the tokens of God's indignation? Who, under these frowns of an infinite being, does not find a powerful motive to submit to his will and his authority? If we should behold the yet undisclosed spectacle of an assembled world, a judgment seat, and the judge thereon dispensing a full retribution to the righteous and the wicked, we should believe in the authority of God as a lawgiver. Why then do we not see in the retributions of that conscience of which God is the author, as these are disclosed to us in the certainties of experience—why do we not see in this present judgment and execution of the sentence, that God reigns in the exercise, if not of a righteous, at least of sovereign authority.

It is here most readily conceded, that reflection may be avoided, and that by voluntary absorption in sensual pleasure, by diverting thought and sensibility from our guilt, the full effects in remorse of conscience may be avoided. Should it here be asked, if the design of our Maker be, that remorse should follow vice to impress us with a sense of his displeasure, why is it put within our power to avoid the full effect? I answer, that the possibility of our so doing may be inseparable from the nature of human mind, and the circumstances in which the greatest good requires that we should be placed. The benignant designs of God may (and we shall see reason hereafter to believe they do) require that man should not be overwhelmed by the agonies of remorse, nor left without its painful and salutary forebodings. Be this however as it may, the fact now alleged does not at all obscure the real tendency of vice to this result. For in every case in which the full measure of remorse is not realized, we know that we have counteracted an actual and powerful tendency to that effect; and that there is nothing in the constitution of the mind which is the natural cause of quietness of spirit as the result of vicious practice. In short there is nothing to conceal, but every thing to make manifest the tendency of virtue to mental tranquillity and happiness, and of vice to opposite results. What then shall we conclude, but that he who is the author of conscience, and who has given it its supremacy and its power to legislate, to judge, and to execute its awards, is himself a lawgiver, a judge, and the executor of judgment? We should be satisfied of the designs and dispositions of a monarch, communicated through the instructions of a well accredited viceroy.

And what are the laws and the lessons of conscience, but those of the viceroy of the King of heaven? If virtue be demanded by the authority of conscience, and if obedience be followed by a satisfaction and serenity which form a rich reward, and if vice be forbidden by the same authority of conscience and visited with the severe though temporary agonies of remorse, then is it as rational to believe that the author of conscience reigns over men as a moral governor, as if we saw him on a throne in the midst of us, giving forth his law with his own voice, and with his own hand dispensing gifts to the obedient, and inflicting punishment on the rebellious. The testimony of conscience is entitled to our belief in the one case, as truly as would be the testimony of our senses in the other.

In the third place, the providential dispensations of God in many other forms, duly contemplated, lead to the same conclusion. If men would reason concerning the designs of God from his acts, as they do from the acts of a fellow-creature, no impression I apprehend would be more strongly made on the human mind than that God reigns over this world as a law-giver;—if not on the principles of perfect righteousness, at least in the exercise of sovereign authority. If they were as willing to contemplate God under this relation as under any other, and to form those conclusions which best accord with and explain the design of his providential dealings, they would see God in every thing. And here the first premise in all our reasonings should be the fact, that all men are transgressors of his law; and beyond all question, deserve the highest possible punishment, provided the greatest good requires a perfect moral system. And now, what is the treatment of this sinful world by its Maker but a course of providence, which speaks severe displeasure, even indignation, for their iniquity, mingled with so much forbearance and kindness, as also to manifest his love of righteousness? Who does not endure, in the various forms of pain, disappointment, and other earthly calamity, sufficient evil at least to awaken the thoughts of God's displeasure for his sins; and though not perhaps in his own case, yet in others, how does God permit the same principle of moral evil to go forth unchecked, to desolate human happiness and to break human hearts, that none may be ignorant of its fearful and fell malignity, and of the woes which he will inflict on the determined workers of iniquity? What tokens of the

severity of his displeasure toward sin, and of the measure of evil with which he may visit it, does this world furnish! On the other hand, what restraints does he put on human selfishness, and especially in the methods in which he governs it by human selfishness, does he show how he abhors its appropriate doings! To my own mind, this is one of the most striking and affecting facts in his providence—without which the world would become a very pandemonium. By so doing, he compels as it were human selfishness itself to perform the very external deeds which benevolence would dictate, and thus secures to a great extent the results of benevolence, and shows in the most impressive manner, how happy, how blessed the world would become, were benevolence the universal principle of human action, and how it would rejoice him to bless a world of perfect virtue.

There is yet another class of evils, from which a most impressive lesson may be learned. I refer to those (inflicted, be it remembered, on a sinful world) which are not in the way of natural consequence the appropriate effect of sin. In view of these evils brought on mankind, by famine, tempests, fire, earthquakes, pestilence, and other like causes, whose connection with sin in the way of natural consequence is entirely undiscoverable, what lesson is taught the children of men? Is it said, they are the natural results of the laws of a material system? But who ordained these laws? God, the intelligent, designing author of this moral creation, permits their appalling action on his creatures, all of whom, we know, have incurred his displeasure by sin! Can we then suppose these evils to be imposed without any reference to moral character? Are they all deserved, and is this fact to have no place, in accounting for the infliction? Are these natural and appropriate expressions of the displeasure of their Author toward his sinful creatures, and yet shall we affirm that they are not so? Do you say that they can be accounted for in some other way? But can it be done as consistently with all the facts, and therefore as rationally? And is not the most philosophical solution also the most credible and the best? Suppose God wished to make a clear and strong impression on the human mind of his high and awful sovereignty, in supporting his authority as a moral ruler; suppose that he wished to show us that he might and that he would not confine penal evils to the mere natural

consequences of sin, but that, in vindication of his prerogative to reign, he had in store still other penalties for the rebellious. Are not these evils, and the manner of their infliction, exactly fitted to manifest and impress his design? Can any other mode of manifesting it be conceived, so fitted to this end? Do you ask, why are these evils so limited and partial?—why does he not desolate the earth in his anger? I answer, that would conceal his design to restore man to duty and to happiness (as I shall show hereafter). God, it should be remembered, has more designs than one to make manifest to his accountable creatures; and it would not be difficult to show, that his providence is in all respects adapted in perfect wisdom to this great purpose. In some modes and forms of providence he manifests one design, and in other modes another, and without the least conflict or incongruity in doing so. And now I ask, what is that which we are considering—what are tempests, earthquakes, pestilences, which carry desolation and woe over large portions of the earth, in such terrific forms as to compel even God-defying Atheism to cry for God's compassion? There is a way of testing an honest judgment on this question. It is, to put one's self into circumstances in which there shall be no temptation to judge unfairly, but every inducement to judge honestly, for practical purposes. Let any one imagine himself under some of these forms of evil; the tempest is bursting on his head, the earth is reeling to and fro like a drunken man—or the ship is on fire in mid-ocean—every arm is palsied, every face pale with despair, and God only can help—who, despairing of life, would not feel himself to be a sinner, and, filled with forebodings of greater evils to come, ask for God's mercy? What then are these evils, honestly judged of, but manifestations of displeasure, which God makes in the exercise of his own irresponsible sovereignty, and in vindication of his high authority as moral governor?

Death, separated from the mode and circumstances in which it takes place, is an evil deserving our serious consideration. What then is death; what is it to all those creatures of God who are able, as God designed they should be, to know and feel it as it is? "Death," in nearly the words of another, "is a most serious and appalling event. It is nature's supreme evil; the terror of God's creation, the monster king, from whose touch and glance every living thing recoils. Death destroys

both action and enjoyment; it mocks at wisdom, strength and beauty, disarranges our plans, robs us of our treasures, desolates our homes, breaks our heart-strings, and blasts our hopes." Death separates us from all we know and love on earth, extinguishes affection, confidence, joy, and life itself; it either carries us to God's judgment-seat or it does not—lands us in a state of untried existence or in the gulf of annihilation. "No wonder nature trembles before it. Reason justifies the fear." "It is but a tribute to the value of the life which is our Maker's gift. To make light of death is an outrage on reason, on nature, and on nature's God." To such an evil has God subjected man. What is it but an expression of displeasure, an act of awful sovereignty. I do not say what will follow it. I take as it is, a known matter of fact to all God's rational and moral creatures. What is it but a proof of God's displeasure—proof that he reigns in vindictive sovereign majesty, avenging his high prerogative to rule, if not in exact righteousness at least in authorizing and compelling reason to fear a more dreadful retribution.

Thus I have attempted to show, that God enforces conformity to his law by that influence which I have called authority. In other words, in view of what God has done in the creation and condition of man as a moral being, and what he does in his providence over this world, there is a very powerful motive to do the will of God, because it is his will. I now ask in view of what has been said, is there any object more worthy of being made the great end of life, than that of obtaining the approbation and avoiding the displeasure of that Being who reigns over this world, and who holds all destiny in his hands? Is there any other way in which we can so rationally hope for substantial good, even in this world—any other in which we can avoid fear—not to say terror—in the prospect of leaving it! Say not that all is uncertain after death. Be it so; and this is the most that can be said to alleviate the prospect. All then is uncertain after death! But is it not the part of wisdom to be prepared for the worst? All is uncertain after death! And is no thought to be taken of even possible evils—and is no preparation to be made against them? All is uncertain! But is this all that can be said? Is there nothing *probable* after death? Look at the facts; God has made man a moral being, fitted to be held responsible for his doings—he has placed him

under law as a rule of action—all adaptations, tendencies, the whole nature and relations of things show that if man would be happy, he must be good. Look at your own character. In bold, habitual defiance you have crossed the will, and so incurred the displeasure of the infinite Being who holds all destiny in his hands. Look at his providence. He tells you in a manner not to be mistaken, that he is displeased. He tells you in every painful thought, fear and misgiving, in every sting of anguish that conscience inflicts, in every evil which sin brings upon yourself and every sinner—in the sorrows, tears, woes and death of a groaning creation around you. He tells you also of a degree of displeasure that confines not its expressions in evil to the direct natural results of wrong-doing. He shows himself to you maintaining his prerogative to reign by inflicting other evils in a mode of awful sovereignty. He will terminate your existence on earth by an event full of terror as being the end of life, an event which will decide either that your soul with its stupendous faculties will be blasted into annihilation—blessed with a joyous immortality, or plunged into pain, despair and horror. Such is God. All this he hath done, and this he will do. And is there nothing probable after death? Think of these things. Think of the question which death will decide in respect to yourself. A question, the mere uncertainty of whose decision is enough to convulse a universe with trembling. Is thoughtless sin then the wisest, safest, best preparation for meeting God in death? I say not what will be. I ask you only to think of what with fearful probability may be. Do you say you can meet it with composure, and drive away the forebodings of conscious guilt? I tell you no—not if reason remains and conscience lives. Nero had not firmness of nerve enough for this. Voltaire, with his settled deadly hate of Christianity, could not do it. There is a God. He hath given a law. That law to the guilty mind will bespeak a Judge. The throne of heaven to the eye of conscience will be filled with a living, reigning, sin-avenging God.

## LECTURE III

**Second leading proposition.**—God's administration is equitable—proved by showing, 1. That God has given the best law, 2. That he distributes good and evil equitably.—In opposition to this proposition, the unequal distribution of good and evil has caused the chief difficulty.—Various theories resorted to.—Is the difficulty real?—(a) Greater difficulties in denying God's equity than in admitting it.—(b) No proof against it; for God is not inequitable in treating men better than they deserve, nor in treating them worse. More rational to regard this distribution as explicable in some unknown way. God may be administering a moral government under a gracious economy.—(c) There is satisfactory proof for his equity—the arguments probable and cumulative.

IN support of our leading proposition,—THAT GOD IS ADMINISTERING A PERFECT MORAL GOVERNMENT OVER MEN, I have attempted to show, that he is administering a moral government; as a peculiar kind of government, and in some proper import of the language. I now proceed, as I proposed, to show—

### II. The equity of his administration.

For this purpose it is necessary only to show—

1. That God has given to men the best law;
2. That in the distribution of good and evil in this world, he does not show himself as departing from, but by this means and others, as adhering to the principles of exact equity.

I remark then:

1. That God has given to men the best law. What I maintain on this topic is, that the law of benevolence, or the law of benevolent action is the best law; and that God has given this law to men. After what has been said in previous lectures, I deem it sufficient to add, that men, as moral beings, know that they are under the law which requires them to prefer the highest happiness of all—of God and his sentient creation—to every object in competition with it, and so to will, purpose, or intend at all times, and in all circumstances, to do the greatest good in their power.

2. God, in the distribution of good and evil in this world, does not show himself as departing from, but by this means and others, as adhering to the principles of exact equity.

If a moral governor gives the best law, and also does, or

shows himself determined to do those things which are necessary to manifest or express his highest approbation of obedience, and highest disapprobation of disobedience, the equity of his administration is established. He may not establish his *rightful* authority; he may be a selfish being, and in other ways prove himself such, yet in the case now supposed, the equity of his administration cannot be impeached.

It is not however supposed, that God manifests the highest approbation of obedience, and the highest disapprobation of disobedience in this world, in every possible way or mode of their manifestation. It is not pretended that he fully and directly expresses these feelings in the distribution of good and evil in this world, or makes it according to the principles of exact justice or perfect equity; though, as I claim, this distribution involves no violation of these principles,—nothing inconsistent with a strict adherence to them. What I maintain is, that while he does not show that he adheres to these principles *merely* by the distribution of good and evil, his manner of doing so, even in this world, is such, that taken in connection with other things, it *fully* and *convincingly* shows his adherence to them.

This is quite supposable. A temporary, short suspension of full and exact retribution does not necessarily involve the least departure from, or violation of, any of the principles of exact justice, nor, as the case may be, does it in the least degree obscure the fact, that a moral governor adheres to these principles in his administration. There may be good and sufficient reasons for the temporary suspension of rewards and punishments, and at the same time, full and satisfactory proofs that the principles of exact justice are not violated nor abandoned.

The unequal distribution of good and evil in this world, as it is called, has occasioned the principal difficulties on this interesting subject. It has appeared on a superficial view of Divine Providence, to involve a plain departure from, or rather a palpable violation of, the principles of exact justice. The error lies in not regarding the system of God's moral government over men as begun or entered upon, but not yet finished—as in progress, not completed—a system, perfect in all its principles as one of influence, not yet carried out into all its issues and results. Hence, it is often represented, not only as imperfect in its present stage of progress, but as actually marred with

palpable injustice in the distribution of good and evil. The righteous it is said, are often cast down in affliction, while the wicked are crowned with prosperity.

Hence, it is naturally asked, if God sustains his authority as a perfect moral governor by adhering to the principles of strict equity in his administration, why does he distribute good and evil in this world in a manner so apparently inconsistent with these principles? This difficulty, so far as I know, has not been removed by any satisfactory explanation. Some theologians, to give plausibility to their reasonings, have resorted to the theory of a future life, in which, as they would have us believe, these violations of justice will cease, and be followed with merited rewards to the righteous, and just punishments to the wicked.\* This solves no difficulty; for it concedes that the principles of justice are in this world actually violated; and how can even a single violation of justice be consistent with the perfect equity of his administration?—Others that they may avoid, rather than meet and remove the difficulty, have adopted an arbitrary and unauthorized notion of justice in God,—one which represents it as neither dictated by benevolence, nor as consistent with it, and which would therefore, dishonor the throne of a usurper and a tyrant.† Thus it is, that occasion has been furnished for the triumph of Infidelity in its favorite conclusion,—that the moral government of God, instead of being maintained according to the unbending principles of eternal justice, is a mere system of tenderness, which does not distinguish between right and wrong; and indulgence, which accommodates itself to all iniquity. Thus it is, I may also add, that many who take the name of Christians, to quell the disturbance and alarm which they feel when they think of Heaven's Sovereign as a God of justice and of judgment, sink all that is venerable and awful in his dominion, into the lovely and easily defied imbecility of parental fondness.

In view of the supposed difficulty arising from the manner in

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\* "Shall oppressed righteousness never be taken under the protection of Providence? Shall the cry of the *innocent* never reach the throne of justice? Are the wrongs and grievances of the good and the righteous never to be redressed?"—LOGAN. SERMONS, p. 240. Even Bishop Butler speaks of God as rewarding virtue and punishing vice, as such, so that every one shall, upon the whole, *have his deserts, &c.*" He speaks of this as "the *completion* of that moral government" which God has begun in this world.—ANALOGY, p. 120. What language is this for a Christian divine?

† *Vide* CHALMERS'S THEOLOGY.

which God distributes good and evil in this world, it may be well to inquire, before we abandon the equity of his moral administration, whether there are not greater difficulties in denying than in admitting it, or rather, whether the difficulty which appears so formidable is not rather imaginary than real, and whether the evidence is not decisive and satisfactory, that he adheres to the most exact principles of equity, without the shadow of violation of them, in his moral government over men.

Such are my own views of the subject; and to these three topics of inquiry I shall now direct my remarks.

I propose to show in respect to the equity of God's moral administration :

In the first place, that there are greater difficulties in denying than in admitting it.

In the second place, that there is no proof against it; and

In the third place, that there is satisfactory proof in support of it.

In the first place, there are greater difficulties in denying than in admitting that God adheres to the principles of equity in his moral administration. The importance and bearing of this remark are, not that it proves even if true, our present position, but that if true, it shows how extremely irrational is the confident denial of it.

God, as we have seen, has furnished unequivocal proofs of the fact that he administers a moral government over men. This fact creates a strong presumption against the supposition that he would destroy all ground of confidence in his character and of respect for his authority, by violating the principles of equity in the distribution of good and evil. The difficulty of admitting such a conclusion is great and peculiar, when we reflect that the author of this system is the omniscient, almighty and immutable Creator. That such a God should give existence to moral beings, adapting their nature to the great end of conformity to the rule of benevolent action; that he should show that rule to be the expression of his will by every part of their nature and every circumstance of their condition, so that their perfection in character and in happiness depends on conformity to that will; that he should clearly evince his purpose to dispose of their happiness as obedient or disobedient, in such a manner as to make it their true and highest interest to obey

his will; that he should reveal himself as immutable in his designs—adopt a course so fitted to secure the confiding homage of his moral creation, and at the same time utterly defeat that end by palpable violations of equity in the distribution of good and evil—to believe all this involves us in no trivial difficulties. It is to suppose that by one course of action he furnishes entirely sufficient and satisfactory evidence of the equity of his government, and yet that by another course of action he proves the utter want of equity in his administration. That an earthly ruler should fall into such inconsistency, through want of foresight or power, or from fickleness of purpose, we might believe. But to ascribe such inconsistency to God, is to suppose it to exist in a case in which the only known causes for it do not exist. If then it be difficult to believe the equity of God's moral government on account of the apparently unequal and unjust distribution of good and evil in the world, it is more difficult in view of other undeniable facts, to believe that this government is not administered in accordance with the principles of entire equity. If to believe its equity we must reject evidence, it is not less true that to disbelieve its equity we must reject evidence more decisive. If it is irrational to believe it, it is more irrational to disbelieve it.

I remark—

In the second place, that there is no evidence from the distribution of good and evil in the world, that God does not act on the principles of strict equity in his moral administration. The only conceivable ways in which God can show the want of equity in the distribution of good and evil, are the following: either by conferring less good, inflicting more evil than is deserved, or by conferring more good or inflicting less evil than is merited; or in other words, *by treating his subjects worse or better than they deserve.*

I remark then—

That he evinces no want of equity by treating any of his subjects *worse* than they deserve. Diversified as are the moral characters of men, there is one truth too obvious and too important to be overlooked in this argument—viz., that none of the subjects of God's moral government are entitled to the least good, but as transgressors of his law deserve evil only. This remark I deem worthy of particular attention, not only on account of its bearing on the present argument, but because, if

I mistake not, it has been overlooked or denied by most ethical writers. In the ablest treatises on this subject, I find it constantly assumed, not only that there are wicked men who do not receive deserved punishment in this life, which is indeed undeniable, but that there are good men who do not receive a merited reward—an assumption I must think as palpably false as can be easily imagined in the view of every mind which has any adequate conception of the divine law, and the principles of human action. Recognizing then the undeniable fact of human guilt and the principles of merit and demerit before advanced; and remembering how much more good all who are accountable for their conduct enjoy, and how much less evil they suffer than they deserve, God's providential distribution of good and evil is exempted in one respect from the reproach of injustice. There is no deficiency of good as a reward, there is no excess of evil as a penalty. All enjoy more good and suffer less evil than they deserve.\* God then does not violate the principle of equity by withholding from any of his subjects merited good, nor by inflicting on any undeserved evil, *i. e.*, by treating any of his subjects *worse* than they deserve.

Again; God evinces no want of equity by treating any of his subjects *better* than they deserve. The good conferred is far greater, and the evil inflicted on all far less than their deserts. The main point however is not decided by this fact. It is true indeed, if we assume that equity *demand*s the execution of penalty immediately on transgression, that to treat the transgressor better than he deserves, by delaying the execution of the penalty, would be a violation of equity, which however may allow what it does not require. It *allows* the instant punishment of the transgressor; but it cannot be truly said to *demand it in all cases*. An atonement may be provided, or delay to punish may be required for some useful purpose, some reasons of State. In respect to the present fact, *viz.*, that God treats his subjects better than they deserve, there are two questions to be decided. One is, whether he is executing legal sanctions, or whether the good is conferred as a *legal reward*, and the evil inflicted as a *legal penalty*. The other is, whether

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\* The case of infants, however it may affect the question of divine benevolence, presents no peculiar difficulty on the present subject. For they are either moral agents or they are not. If they are, they are sinners, and their sufferings are deserved. If they are not, the present position does not respect them.

the present, or even any execution of legal sanctions, in all conceivable cases, is necessary to and demanded by the perfect equity of his administration.

It is here important also to ascertain, on the supposition of a violation of the principles of equity in treating subjects *better* than they deserve, wherein such violation consists. It is conceded then, that the withholding of merited good and the infliction of deserved evil, would be a violation of the rights of the individual subject or subjects, admitting of no vindication. Could such a fact be found under the government of God, any attempt to vindicate the equity of his administration would be vain. But to treat subjects *better* than their desert, is at least no violation of their rights as individuals. But if it can be clearly shown that the public good suffers by treating subjects better than they deserve, then the act is as truly one of injustice to the public, as the treatment of individuals worse than they deserve would be an act of injustice to them. In respect to these two modes, there is one possible and very material difference. While a moral governor cannot treat subjects worse than they deserve, without palpable injustice to them as individuals, and I may say to the public also, it is quite possible that he should treat them better than their deserts, without injustice either to them as individuals or to the public. The case is supposable, that some temporary delay in the execution of penalty after the commission of crime, should greatly subserve the public good and increase the efficacy of law. No rights of the public, or of individuals, would be interfered with or violated by it, and no injustice done to either. Nor is this all. It is also supposable that a moral governor, especially one of infinite wisdom and power, should devise and adopt some expedient by which subjects should be treated better than they deserve, or even be entirely exempted from penal evil, without a violation of the rights of the public. Such cases are credible, there being no evidence to the contrary. Why then say that it can make no difference, whether we suppose that God, in the distribution of good and evil in this world, executes legal sanctions or not, since if he does, he violates the principles of equity, by treating subjects better than they deserve; and if he does not, he abandons them altogether and leaves his authority as a lawgiver wholly unsupported; for I readily concede, that if God does dispense good and evil

in this manner, *as legal sanctions*, (and this is extensively maintained by theologians) he violates the principles of equity. To treat men so much better than they deserve, and this in the execution of legal sanctions, would be manifest injustice to the public. But I deny that there is the least evidence, that in the distribution of good and evil in this world, he is executing legal sanctions; and of course, that there is the least evidence furnished by it, that he is not adhering to the principles of strict equity in his moral administration.

On this position the decision of the question now before us chiefly depends.

I remark then—

That it is more rational to regard the apparently unjust distribution of good and evil as a fact incomprehensible by us, and yet in some unknown manner consistent with the equitable administration of God's moral government, than to pronounce it absolute proof of want of equity in his administration. Let it be remembered that the only possible or supposable inconsistency in the case is, that he treats his subjects better than they deserve during a very short period of their existence, even that of human life. It is not incredible that there should be much that is incomprehensible under the government of God. This is indeed no reason why we should overlook or disregard the least legitimate evidence against the equity of his government; but it is a reason why we should carefully discriminate between what is and what is not legitimate evidence. If any thing occurs under the government of God which we can pronounce an undoubted violation of the principles of equity, then we may and ought so to do. If we knew that God treated any of the subjects of his moral government worse than they deserved, we should be authorized and required to assert the existence of injustice in his moral administration, and if we knew that *in the execution of legal sanctions*, or in that punishment which he inflicted on transgressors to sustain his authority, he treated any better than they deserved, this too, as we have seen, would be a decisive manifestation of injustice to the public. But we do not know nor can we prove, that the treatment in question is in the way or form of a strictly legal procedure, and of course that it is not perfectly consistent with the equity of his administration. It is not difficult to see *how* or *in what manner* this may be. A

temporary delay of punishment may be one means of more effectually securing the end of punishment. As in human governments, public trials are of great importance in giving effect to law; so in the divine, men in this world, like the criminal waiting his day of trial and execution, may be destined to meet God in judgment, and to receive a just retribution in a future state of existence. I speak here of the mere credibility of this, which is all that my argument now requires. The reasonable supposition that punishment may be delayed as a useful expedient of moral government, and that subjects should for a little season be treated better than they deserve, precludes all evidence from such treatment against the perfect equity of God's administration.

Again; there is yet another way in which to treat subjects better than they deserve, may be consistent with the equity of God's moral government. It is a reasonable supposition that God *may be* administering this government under a gracious economy, or through an atonement. It does not, as facts show, lie beyond the limits of conjecture. There is no proof to the contrary. Our ignorance of the ways or means, by which God would dispense pardon to the transgressors of law consistently with his justice, is no proof that there are none. To affirm such an impossibility in respect to God, would be obvious presumption on the part of human ignorance. Nor does the fact that some heathen philosophers maintained the impossibility that a just God should forgive sin, prove that there is not sufficient evidence, under the light of nature, to authorize even the belief of the contrary. To say nothing of the prevalence of the opposite opinion evinced by expiatory sacrifices, the assertion of such an impossibility must be admitted to be false by the Christian, and wholly unauthorized by the infidel. It is not incredible then, that God in some way, or by some expedient, should, consistently with perfect justice, become placable to offending man. The fact therefore, that he treats the subjects of his government better than they deserve, furnishes no evidence that he does not administer his government on the principles of strictest equity.

That there may be no misunderstanding on this point, let me say that I do not affirm that the distribution of good and evil in this world, either *is* or *is not* consistent with the equity of God's moral administration. I affirm only the possibility of

such consistency,—that there is no proof that the one is inconsistent with the other ; and that, for aught we can say to the contrary, it may be consistent with it. We know not either ; and as mere ignorance is not competent to make an argument, neither is it competent to make an objection. The fact, in and of itself, is no evidence for or against the equity of God's moral administration. We are thus turned back to what we know, and have proved,—to those facts which we have already established. These, as I now claim, and proceed to show—

In the third place, furnish satisfactory proof that God adheres to the principles of equity in his moral administration. To estimate justly the force of our present arguments, let it be kept in mind, that there is no evidence against the truth of our position,—that there is not, in the entire providence of God, the least departure from the principles of exact justice, in his moral administration. The question then is, whether there are any facts, which in such a case furnish legitimate and satisfactory proof that he does adhere to these principles. This is what I now claim. To illustrate the nature and the force of this argument, let us recur again to our example. A skillful artificer has begun to make a watch:—so much of the machinery falls under our observation, and we know so well its essential parts, that we can be at no loss in respect to the object of its construction. He has entire ability to finish, and to give it that perfection, as a whole, which shall correspond with the absolute perfection of all the parts which we have seen. There is no reason to believe that he will not finish what he has begun, while from his known decision of purpose and vigor in execution, as well as from the actual progress of the work, there is every reason to believe that he will. I ask now, is it rational, or is it not, to believe that the watch-maker will complete his work? Will he omit to insert the mainspring, or any other essential or important part of the machine? No one can doubt, or think of doubting.

Such then, is the argument now to be presented for the equity of God's moral government over men. I shall offer it only in a general form, intending to consider it more particularly hereafter.

God then, has in fact established a moral government over men, and actually entered on its administration. He has shown his great design to administer such a government over them by the constitution of their nature, and all the circumstances of

their condition. He has given them a law or rule of action, not less clearly than had it come forth with a living voice from his throne. In this fact, and in all the modes of his providence he shows himself as assuming the right to reign over men as a lawgiver; and maintains that right by also showing that he has their happiness entirely at his own disposal, and will in fact dispose of it, as they obey or disobey his will, so as to make it for their true and highest interest to obey. He thus clearly reveals himself as their sovereign, claiming submission in the way of supreme prerogative, and reigning in the exercise of absolute authority. His administration is in no respect marred by the slightest act of injustice. Nothing has transpired to prevent God, the next moment, and with the ease of omnipotence, from revealing himself in the glories and terrors of exact justice. Will he ever do this? Will he, or will he not, after this short and momentary life, give this perfection to that system of moral government which he has begun? Has he departed from the principles of perfect justice in dispensing good and evil to his accountable subjects? Never. Will he ever depart from these principles? Will he consent, that this moral system shall want the strength, dignity and glory which these principles alone can give it, and terminate in failure, dishonor and mockery? Will not a system of jurisprudence begun by heaven's Sovereign, and carried forward, not only without injustice, but with every indication of exact justice which the present stage of its progress, so far as we can say, admits, be carried out to a full and perfect consummation in the issues of perfect righteousness? I say not here what these issues will be—I decide not whether man's probation will or will not be prolonged after death; whether a merely legal economy will or will not be followed by a just retribution to all, nor whether the final results will or will not be those of a gracious economy. But I ask, whether the results will not show that God is now, and ever has been administering his moral government over men on the principles of perfect equity? The grand question is, what idea shall we form of God as the governor of his moral creation? It becomes us to fix on some view of God in this relation that shall be definite, intelligible, rational, and on which we can rely. Is the throne of God then sustained only by the arm of his power, threatening us with the terrors of omnipotent despotism? Has it no other basis than the sensi-

tiveness and imbecility of paternal fondness and indulgence? Or does it stand in its true grandeur on the pillars of eternal justice? The first I concede is palpably inconsistent with the abundance and benignity of his gifts, as well as too appalling to be admitted even by those whose principles lead to such a conclusion. If now we adopt that view of God which represents him as too indulgent to adhere to the unbending principles of exact justice, then what is to be done with certain stubborn matters of fact? Why has God so obviously assumed the high prerogative of moral dominion over men? Why has he given them a law absolutely perfect in precept and unbending in its claims? Why in the very nature, adaptation and tendencies of all things within and without us, has he shown that there is absolutely no sure and infallible way to avoid complete misery and obtain perfect happiness, but by obedience to his law? Why does he compel men to know and feel, notwithstanding all their wishes to the contrary, that whatever may be the issues of his government, they will be at least above all contempt,—such as accord with the attributes of an infinite Being, and enthrone him, if not in the confidence and affections, at least in the homage and awe of his intelligent creation? Why is it that he places himself before man so constantly in all the majesty and terrors of absolute and august sovereignty by the calamities, woes, and death of his sentient creation—afflicting, agonizing the work of his own hands, and yet never swerving from the principles of perfect justice? Is this fiction, or is it fact? Is all this nothing but the overflowings of sentimental tenderness; or are these the results of God's displeasure for man's wickedness, telling us what perfect justice can, and with fearful probability will, do in some future hour of full retribution? Death—that heaviest thunderbolt of God's wrath that ever falls on this groaning creation—what is death? What is it? what will it do with that frail imagination of yours that God is all tenderness? Look over these terrors of God and say are they to lead us to suppose ourselves the mere “nurslings of his fondness,” instead of the subjects of his righteous and holy dominion? Is all this only to make us light-hearted when death comes to look at us in earnest? Is all this designed only to lead us to make merry around the death-bed of others or on our own, or to amuse ourselves with trifles when we or others are falling into the hands of the living God? No. The fear

of God as a righteous lawgiver and judge, is no superstitious fear. God does not reveal himself to us throned in the soft and smiling radiance of an indulgent deity, caring more for our happiness than for our moral conduct. He does not show himself diffusing only bliss over this world without respect to the doings of those who dwell on it. If he shows himself deserving any thing, it is to make man good that he may be happy; if he shows approbation, it is of virtue; if disapprobation, it is of vice; if he shows himself immutable in any thing, it is in his approval of the one and in his disapproval of the other. In a word, if God shows himself as aiming at any thing, designing any thing in his government of this world, it is to maintain the perfect equity of his moral administration. What he has so obviously begun in the assumption of this high prerogative, in giving his perfect law to his moral creatures, and in this whole economy of legislation, he will finish. It is his great design. To this all things else are manifestly subservient. It is the all in all of God, our maker, to enthrone himself amid the grandeurs of eternity, the righteous moral governor of his moral creation. Death will not arrest the progress of this design, nor defeat its consummation. It will only disclose the actual results of principles already manifest—only draw aside the curtain that now faintly conceals the full effulgence of God, within that high and inviolable sanctuary, where justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne forever.

## LECTURE IV.

Second leading proposition continued, viz.—God administers an equitable moral government.—The possibility of a future state precludes all objections against the Divine equity.—No presumption against a future state.—No proof the soul is material.—No evidence that death destroys the soul.—Direct proofs of a future state.—Kind of evidence furnished.—No cause known which can destroy the soul.—Every thing which has begun continues to exist.—The present state unsuitable to the natural perfection of man.—Argument from man's moral nature decisive.

IN the last lecture I attempted to show that God administers an *equitable* moral government over men.

In considering the argument against this position, derived from the distribution of good and evil in this world, I endeavored to show, that the only fact which can be supposed to furnish the least evidence against the equity of his administration, viz., that he treats men better than they deserve during this short and comparatively momentary state of existence, furnishes not the shadow of such evidence. This fact I claimed, *on the supposition of a future state*, may answer some highly useful and necessary purpose, and that if we suppose even a strictly legal economy, it may, like the temporary delay to punish offenders against human governments, subserve the very ends of public justice; that it cannot therefore, be alleged as in the least degree inconsistent with the exact equity of his moral administration, or as involving any departure from, or violation of, the principles of exact equity. Hence it was claimed, that God might at any moment show, that in entire consistency with all his doings, he has ever adhered and that he ever will adhere to these principles, and that he might do this in either of two ways—either by inflicting a full and merited retribution on all, or by showing that he administers his government under a gracious economy. Having thus shown that there is not the slightest evidence against, I presented the direct evidence for, the equity of his moral government. I showed that he is actually administering a moral government—that to administer such a government over men is manifestly his great design—one to which his works of creation and providence are obvi-

ously subservient; a design which stands forth first, greatest, brightest of all; that he has manifested his equity by giving to men the best law—the only law which a being of perfect justice would or could give; that he is able to administer his government in perfect equity, and that he has, so to speak, scrupulously avoided treating any of his subjects *worse* than they deserve, while in treating them *better*, he has not furnished the least reason to doubt his equity. With these things in view, it was claimed that we are shut up to one of these conclusions, either that this chief design of the Infinite Being will fail in defeat and mockery, which is utterly incredible; or that he ever has been, and is still adhering, and ever will adhere to the principles of justice in his moral administration.

Thus the supposition or the bare possibility of a future state is sufficient to neutralize every objection to the equity of God's moral administration. It leaves in its full and unimpaired force the evidence for its equity, which uncounteracted by opposing evidence is abundant and decisive. Nor is this all. The possibility of a future state in connection with such evidence for the equity of his administration, reveals the certainty by revealing the necessity of a future state, that God may finish what he has begun, and what as an omniscient, almighty and immutable being he must finish. We say then not only that there may be, there will be (for there must be) a future state, in which God will unfold by the requisite issues the perfect equity of his moral government over men. What else can be supposed or thought of? What otherwise will become of the great, the most obvious design of God in the creation and government of this world? Shall we suppose such a design abandoned? Is Omniscience at fault in the plan; is Omnipotence discomfited in the execution; are infinite attributes thwarted of an end worthy of such attributes; in place of reality is there pretense and pageantry, instead of majesty and glory is there the self-degradation of an Infinite Being? What shall we say? Plainly without a future state of being for man, the works and ways of God present the most insolvable of all problems—the most intractable of all enigmas. His designs, his doings, his character, what he is, what we his creatures are, and what we are to be—all this entire moral system is but a feverish dream of uncertainty, agitation and pain—a chaos of darkness and terror—while the mere supposition of a future state is like the word of

the Creator, when in respect to this material system he said, "Let there be light, and there was light." As a mere supposition, while it at once reveals its own reality, it pours the effulgence of noon-day on all the works of creation and providence, and shows God as the righteous moral governor of his moral creation, reigning to display the harmony, grandeur and glory of his perfect dominion.

The necessity of a future state in order that God may accomplish what he has so obviously begun, is decisive as an argument, and it is not my design to dwell longer upon this particular mode of reasoning. Indeed to see the great facts of creation and providence which disclose so clearly the chief design of God in respect to man, is also to see the necessity and reality of a future state in which by its requisite issues the equity of God's moral government over this world will be unfolded. I will only add on this topic, that if called upon to engage in controversy with one who denied a future state, I should place my chief reliance on this argument, and feel strong for the contest.

The question however of a future state has been controverted so much on other grounds, and has been supposed to involve so many difficulties, that to examine these modes of reasoning may serve to strengthen an argument in some minds, if any additional strength is needed. In this mode of argument, then I proceed to show that—

*There is a future state of existence for man.*

I propose to show as briefly as may be:

In the first place, that there is not even a presumption against the fact; and

In the second place, to offer direct proofs of the fact of a future state.

In the first place, there is not even a presumption against the fact.

Some philosophers have maintained that the soul is a material substance, or that its existence depends on our bodily organization, and hence have denied its immortality. That the soul is material, or that its existence depends on any organization of matter, is in my view wholly a gratuitous and unauthorized assumption.

Its immateriality however I do not consider as a fact of any importance on the question of its immortality. The only use

which seems to be made of it, is to refute an objection against the possibility of the soul's future existence. It can however in no respect answer even this purpose, since the annihilation of the soul or its continued existence is equally possible to the Creator, whether it be material or immaterial. It must be admitted that the soul may have a future existence whether it be a material or a spiritual substance.

Again; there is no evidence that death destroys the soul. I am not saying that death does *not* produce this effect, but simply that there is *no* evidence that it does produce it. We know to some extent the actual effects of death, but we cannot say that the destruction of the soul is one of them. We do not know on what the continued existence of the soul and of its powers proximately depends. We do not therefore know enough of death to say whether it will or will not destroy the soul. Its existence with all its powers in perfect exercise, may depend on that which death cannot touch. There is indeed an intimate connection in *many respects* between the soul and the body. But we have no such knowledge of the nature and mode of this connection, as to authorize us to decide that the soul cannot exist without the body, and even in a more perfect state. Should this be proved hereafter, it would not contradict or be inconsistent with any fact of our present knowledge. Death indeed removes the souls of others from our view. It drops its dark curtain over the future, but it tells us nothing of its doings or its effects beyond death. The nature of things then reveals no certain connection between death and the destruction of the soul.

Again; there is no evidence from any known phenomena against the future existence of the soul. It is from this source that the most forcible objections against our doctrine and the most plausible arguments for the opposite opinion are derived. What then are the phenomena—what are the facts? This is the question which must be answered with precision. All that can be pretended is, that certain states of the body, those of disease, of intoxication, of old age, obviously impair the mental faculties, and, as the case may be, suspend or remove all visible evidence of their existence, while death puts an utter end to it.

To the question, then—do these facts furnish the slightest evidence that the soul ceases to exist at death?

I answer—

All the facts now referred to may be comprised in these two—impaired faculties, and the suspension or final cessation of all visible evidence of their existence.

And first, let us look carefully at the supposed evidence from *impaired faculties*. That some diseases, and that old age often impair the faculties of the mind, cannot be doubted. But many do not produce this effect; and in some cases, disease actually destroys life, and leaves the mind, even to the last, in the vigor and activity of perfect health. This fact shows that the mind is not so dependent on the state of the body as necessarily to languish and die under the very causes that destroy the body. It shows more, that there is not the slightest reason for supposing that disease destroys the existence of powers, which, even in its progress, it often leaves wholly unimpaired till death. There are similar exceptions in regard to the influence of age. Generally, indeed, as bodily health and vigor decay, the mental faculties decline. If there are no decisive exceptions to this fact, still there is nothing sufficient to show that the existence of the mind *necessarily* depends on the life of the body. Indeed, the influence of some diseases, and of old age to impair mental vigor, is in no respect inconsistent with the supposition, that the body, in some particular states, is a mere incumbrance to the mind, and produces effects which would wholly cease by their separation; so that the mind, being wholly disconnected with the body, would possess greater vigor, and awake to new and hitherto unknown activity. Here we must not confound one cause with another; we must not consider disease as terminating in death, but *disease, as such*, producing its own proper and known effects on the mind. Suppose then, (although there are many decisive exceptions to the fact) that disease always, during its continuance, impairs or deranges the powers of the mind. Yet, does it destroy them? In far the greatest number of cases, when the cause is removed, does not the effect cease; or rather, does not the cause often cease, without the destruction of the mind as its consequent? Does the impairing of mental powers necessarily involve their destruction? Do you see and know any other effect of disease but the former, and this merely temporary? Does one effect involve the other? You might as well say, that because a blow on the head produces a momentary de-

rangement of the mental faculties, it actually lands the soul in annihilation.

Do you say, that it is not meant that disease as such ever destroys the mind? Why then is it so often asserted? If the meaning be, that disease weakens the faculties in many cases with greater or less rapidity, and terminates in death as its proximate effect, be it so; but this is only specifying another result of disease, viz., death. Take then all its effects. If the result of disease, in mental imbecility, does not show the soul's annihilation, does death prove it to our observation or our knowledge?

This brings us to the other fact, viz., the cessation of all visible evidence of the soul's existence. This is admitted; and be it remembered, it is all that can be claimed. But does the cessation of the visible evidence of the soul's existence prove that it has actually ceased to exist? The want of evidence of the existence of a thing is surely no proof of its non-existence. In some cases, as that of drowning when followed by resuscitation, the evidence of the existence of an intelligent agent wholly ceases from our observation. But who infers the destruction of the agent? I do not say, that the cessation of evidence of his existence proves that he did not cease to exist; this is proved by resuscitation; but that the cessation of the evidence of existence does not prove that he did cease to exist. I am willing to concede that it shows the suspension of the intellectual operations, but it does not prove the non-existence of the agent.

Between this case and that of death, there is indeed one important difference. In the event of death, the evidence that there is a mere suspension of the mental operations, or rather the evidence that the agent continued to exist furnished by resuscitation, is wholly wanting. We cannot say that the agent has not, nor can we say that he has ceased to exist. The event of death proves nothing, and, in itself considered, authorizes no belief. And if, as we have seen, the cessation of the visible evidence of continued existence is perfectly consistent with the fact of its continuance, as in the case of apparent drowning, then, in the event of death, this evidence may entirely cease, and yet resuscitation may follow.

I admit another fact often appealed to in this argument; viz., that death destroys what other causes of the suspension of the

mental powers do not affect, viz., the organs of sensation and all the functions of animal life. But we have the most decisive proof that the continuance and activity of the mental powers do not depend on the continuance of the bodily organs. Even those ideas which are derived through these organs may be as vivid when they are not, as when they are the media of reception. Of this the phenomena of dreams are decisive. If the mind without the organs of sensation can recall the ideas of sensation without their objects, *a fortiori* it can form ideas of sensation without the organs and their objects; so that death destroys the powers of sensation and still less those of reflection, no evidence can be adduced. To infer that it does from the mere want of evidence that it does not, is as truly unphilosophical, as to infer that sound sleep is a state of annihilation.

If it here be said that the cases are materially different, since in one we have the evidence of continued existence from subsequent phenomena, I readily admit it. But then these show that the conclusion of non-existence is not authorized by the suspension of visible intellectual operations, so all that can be said in a case in which such subsequent phenomena do not exist is, that there is *no evidence* of continued existence, and not that there is *evidence* of non-existence.

If it be further said that as there is no evidence of continued existence after death, either in the event itself or in any subsequent phenomena, it is irrational to believe in such existence, I most readily admit it, so far as death and its subsequent phenomena can be supposed to furnish evidence. We are not authorized to believe in the future existence of the soul on this ground merely, nor be it remembered, are we authorized to disbelieve it. When there is no evidence there should be no faith, and *no faith* should not be confounded with believing. If the event of death authorizes no faith on the question whether the soul will exist after death, then it does not authorize the belief *that it does not exist*. The event of death then, and all its attendant and consequent phenomena, are to be laid aside as having no bearing on the question before us. Provided there is no other source of evidence, we are bound to believe nothing respecting the future existence of the soul.

Laying aside then the event of death as having no bearing on the question under consideration, I proceed,

In the second place to offer direct proofs of a future state.

Before I adduce the proposed proofs, I would make a remark or two respecting the nature or kind of evidence to be offered. It is not pretended then, that it is of that kind which excludes the possibility in the nature of things of the truth of the opposite proposition. The evidence is of that kind which logicians call *probable* or *moral*, as distinguished from *demonstrative*, evidence which in a thousand cases to one, controls the practical faith of men, and must control it, or they must act the part of idiots or madmen. Nor are there any arguments either in natural or revealed theology which are in the strict sense *demonstrative*, that is, the opposites of which involve known contradiction. This remark is of more importance in relation to the present subject than to many other cases. The bare possibility, the mere *may be* that death is the end of our existence, is peculiarly apt to prevent or weaken the force of the existing evidence to the contrary. Now let it be remembered that a *may be* is not an argument. There is a *may be*, that you will never leave this room alive; it *may be*, that when you take food the next time it will produce strangulation and death, and to give no other example, it *may be* that if you reason yourself into the belief of either of these things, or that death is the end of man, you will reason falsely. How exceedingly irrational it is to reject *moral* evidence, and especially when it consists of an accumulation of probabilities on one side of a question, merely because there is a possibility of the truth of an opposite conclusion, all men see and feel in the ordinary business of human life. They know that on this principle they could not act nor even subsist. God has made the human mind to be influenced by moral evidence in assenting to truth as really as in assenting to truth in the form of intuition. It might perhaps be said, that it was designedly so because it is necessary to moral beings in a state of moral discipline. Be it so or not, the philosopher who reasons and concludes in morals or theology with an argument no better than *may be*, ought to be eulogized at most as a *may be* philosopher.

To proceed now with the direct proofs of a future state,  
I remark—

That there is no cause known which will destroy the existence of the soul. It is reasonable to believe that things will continue as they have done in our experience, unless there be

some cause known to us that will produce a change. This is the kind of evidence or rather of reasoning on which we rely, and on which the mind is made to rest its belief in cases innumerable. For example, how confidently we believe on this ground, simply that the sun will rise and set to-morrow, and that our lives will be prolonged for some time to come. So powerful is the influence of this kind of evidence, that when it accords with our wishes as it does in respect to the continuance of our present life, it is often unimpaired by high degrees of opposing evidence. Without however attempting to measure the degree of faith which is authorized by this kind of evidence, it is undeniable that such a degree as to make it practical in regard to the business of life is not only authorized but required. But if we have sufficient to justify or require any degree of faith, that the life of the body will be continued another year or even another day, we have much more to justify the belief that the soul will exist after death and forever. The evidence from past experience simply considered, may justly be viewed as the same in both cases. But in respect to the life of the body, we know that there are many causes of its destruction, some one of which may terminate it at any hour or moment; while in respect to the life of the soul, we know of none that ever did or ever will terminate it. I need not say how strong would be our belief in the continued endless life of the body, if we knew no cause of its termination. How firm then according to the same principle, ought to be our faith in the endless life of the soul.

The principle of belief now referred to in connection with the known immateriality of the soul, is that on which primarily rests the universal belief of mankind in a future existence. Nor can the soundness of the principle, nor the reasonableness of the faith be questioned. When has man known any thing to cease to be, without a cause? Why then, in this case, should we believe, that what has been, and now is, will not continue to be; while we neither know, nor have the least reason to believe, that there is any cause that will prevent its continued existence?

Again; every thing within our observation, which has begun, continues to exist; it is therefore reasonable to believe that the soul will do so. The body indeed seems to perish; but we know, that while it decays, it does not actually and truly

perish. From the creation of the visible universe to the present moment, we have not the slightest reason to believe that one atom of it all has ceased to be. What we term decay and death in the animal and vegetable kingdoms is not annihilation, but only a change of parts and relations, and a name for another form of continued existence. If then every particle of matter, even of our own bodies, to which God has given existence, continues to exist, is it philosophical to disbelieve, or even to doubt the continued existence of the soul? If every thing else, after all that can be called decay or death, continues to exist, the rational conclusion is that the soul does also. The dust, so to speak, returns to the dust as it was and yet it is carefully preserved; why then does not the spirit ascend to God who gave it? Is it rational, is it philosophical to deny and overlook such analogies? Where had been the discoveries of Newton, had he disregarded them? Where had been all science, had men not believed that what is true of some things which they know, is also true of other things which they do not know? It belongs to him who denies or doubts the continued existence of the soul after death, to produce some positive proof of a departure from the entire analogy of nature in respect to this agent. Thus the death of the body, the very thing from which the destruction of the soul has been inferred, becomes proof to the contrary. If death does not even destroy the body, or rather if it is only a change involving the continued existence of every particle of it, why should it destroy the soul, or rather, why not result in its continued existence? Which is the logical inference? *Death is a change in which every particle of the body continues to exist, therefore the soul ceases to exist; or death is a change in which every particle of the body continues to exist, therefore the soul continues to exist.* In the one case, the premises and conclusion have no conceivable connection. In the other, they have the same that led Newton to believe that the same law of gravity which pertained to a falling apple, controls the motions of every planet. Even if the mind is matter, why is it that not a single atom of unthinking matter is destroyed, and every atom of thinking matter must be annihilated? Why is it that the almighty Preserver of one should so carefully take care of its every particle, and yet so carefully and scrupulously annihilate the other? Is this the doctrine of reason, of philosophy? True, we admit the possibility of its destruction by the

Creator. But must not some reason be found, some motive discovered for the exclusive annihilation of that which we call mind, of that which gives all its value and worth to the creatures of his power? Why should the Creator of man preserve every thing in his creature which is strictly corporeal and comparatively worthless, and destroy every thing that is mental and meet for immortality; why preserve every thing that likens man to the dust beneath his feet, and destroy all that constitutes the image of Himself? Would the father of a child do this? Would the maker of a watch act on such a principle? Well may we ask philosophy, if man's resemblance to his Maker is only the reason for blasting his creation into annihilation.

Further, I argue the doctrine of a future state from the obvious unsuitableness of the present to the perfection of the nature of man. In the material world, the more our knowledge extends, the more of order and of system, of design and of adaptation appears in all that we behold, until the conviction is forced upon us that the Maker of all forms no abortive purposes. If we look at the nature and condition of animals, we find a striking coincidence between them, their condition being so accommodated to their instincts and their powers, that the obvious design of their being may be fully attained in this world. Hence it is, that while if we had nothing to reason from but their past life with our ignorance of their utter destruction by death, we should rationally infer their future existence; yet in view of the obvious adaptation of their nature to their present condition, and of the fact that the end of their existence is here fully attained, it is irrational to believe that they continue to exist after death. Not so however in respect to man. If man's being terminates with his life, then does his present existence present the most inscrutable of all mysteries, the most insolvable enigma to be found in all the works of God. We can tell with more or less confidence, for what all things else are created, but to decide what is the end of that creature of God for whom every thing else is made, that being who bears the likeness of his Creator, defies and baffles all philosophy. Our Maker, who delights to unfold his wisdom and his power to our inspection in the manifestation of the adaptations, objects and ends of all his other works, even in the structure of an insect, conceals the design of the greatest of

them all in utter darkness; or rather what is far more inexplicable, he shows that the most exalted design is under an absolute necessity of utter failure and defeat. Nor is this all. He exhibits himself in the decisive character of a deceiver, obliging us to regard adaptations and tendencies as no evidence of plan and of the actual results of his works. He thus unsettles all our principles of reasonings from these sources, and whether such facts give us annihilation or immortality, our conclusion has no claim to confidence. This is too unphilosophical for our opponents to believe. What then is the Creator's great design in giving existence to such a creature as man? If we consider his intellectual faculties, the foundation laid in his constitution for unlimited improvement, the wide range for acquisition opened through the immensity of space and duration; what is man qualified to become, or rather what is he not qualified to become compared with any thing he is during this momentary life? Is it credible that God has thus fitted the human mind for progress, furnished it with so beautiful an arrangement of faculties for every kind of acquisition, and incited it by an impulse that ceaselessly awakens it to the pursuit—so formed it, that by every effort it becomes stronger and more eager for further attainments, that when this mind has been thus qualified, disciplined, and prepared to go on to perfection, the very improvement it has made should become a reason for arresting its progress in annihilation? Are we to believe that He who made man what he is, will destroy his own work, merely because if permitted to live, he would accomplish the high end for which he made him?

The argument from *the moral nature* of man is made still more impressive by the superiority of its design and object. If there is no existence for man beyond the present state, what can we suppose to be the design of his Creator in forming him a moral being? What powers, what capacities are involved in his nature? What capacity to enjoy, and what power to impart happiness to others! Who can reflect on the nature of such a creature, his intelligence, his susceptibility, his will, his conscience, the dignity, the excellence of which he is capable, the moral victories and triumphs he may win, his fitness to hold on his way with archangels, strong in advancing all that good which infinite wisdom could devise and infinite benevolence could love, the graces with which he

may be adorned, and the beatitudes with which he may be blessed, and not believe that he is made to be one with the God who created him—a partaker of his blessedness, a companion of his eternity?

If we consider what an almost total failure there is, even on the part of every good man, to attain in any respect the great end of his creation; how weak in resolution and feeble in heart—how little success in subduing his passions and governing his temper—how much of life is spent before he even begins to live in obedience to the demands of duty and of conscience—how remote he is from the uniform and settled tranquillity of perfect virtue—what dissatisfaction he feels with the present, unappeased by all the world can offer—what an impatience and disgust with the littleness of all he finds—what an ever restless aspiration after nobler and higher things—what anticipations and hopes from futurity, never realized here on earth—how does our spirit labor under a sense of the incongruity between his attainments and his powers; and unless there is a future state, what an insignificance is imparted to all that can be called virtue here on earth, and also to man himself.

What too shall we say of all those proofs of the power, the wisdom, the goodness of the great Author of all things, which are presented to us in all his works, and the satisfaction there is in knowing and contemplating such a Being? To what purpose are we rendered capable of elevating our thoughts to him, if we are never to learn any more of his character than we know in this short life? For what object has he given proofs of his overruling power and providence, and excited man to look to him with submission, confidence, and affection, if man has no interests to be cared for but those of a day? Why, in a word, has he made those manifestations of his Godhead, and of those relations to man, and of man to himself, which constitute the basis of all that we call religion, if all these are to cease at death? I do not say it would be absolutely worthless even then, but it would sink to comparative insignificance. It would be the religion of a being who has no God but for the brief moment of this mortal life—the love, the hopes, the confidence of an insect of an hour, instead of the religion of an immortal, trusting in God for the gifts of his goodness through a coming eternity.

Indeed, nothing is more obvious to reason, than that life to

man would be but a short series of animal sensations, and death only the changing of the relation of a few particles of matter. To live as he would, and as well as he might, were death the end of him, would at the same time be a perversion of powers—an outrage on nature, unmatched in the works of God. The true and proper business of life would be changed. All that could be called the end of his existence would become scarcely worthy of a thought; and, as a being of a day, he would sink to an insignificance which would render the course he pursued through the world, a concern too trivial for consideration. Why then are those powers given to man, which fit him to rise to such an inconceivable height in the scale of being, without a motive to aspire to such elevation, or the possibility of attaining it? Why this destiny to self-degradation? In all his other works nothing is waste, nothing is useless. Every organ, appetite, faculty, hope and desire, in every creature has its counterpart object. Man is an exception to this absolute universality. For his moral nature, for that part of man which alone gives value to existence with its high capacities and aspirations, the universe presents no objects of corresponding worth and greatness. Or rather, viewed in relation to man's moral nature, every thing is great. The material universe around him, the total sum of human existence, the events that happen on our globe are great. All the analogies, tendencies and relations everywhere conspicuous, are great, and manifest great designs and results. This material system bespeaks a corresponding moral system which is great, and furnishes unquestionable intimations of a vast scheme whose disclosures will be great. The moral system as here developed is great in its authority, its law, in all its tendencies, and actual results. God is great. Man is great. His nature bespeaks the dignity of an immortal, and looks onward to the grandeurs of eternity. Eternity is great. And yet man, for whom all this greatness exists—placed amid it all, and next in greatness to his God—man, made, designed, and fitted for eternity, exists but a moment!! Is it credible? Is it not a violence to the harmonies of creation, a defeat and failure of God's designs, that no rational man can believe? Is it not giving a contemptible insignificance to the very image of God in his own creatures? Is it not reflecting most severely and dishonorably on the wisdom and the power that gives them existence? No human mind, with these

views of God and of man, can rest in such a conclusion. Shall a God of infinite natural perfection form myriads of beings so much in his own image, and doom their powers to uselessness and waste while they live, and the beings themselves to an instant annihilation? It were a farce in creation; the infinite God sporting in the exercise, and with the products of his infinite attributes. No. Man is made for a higher purpose than can be answered by this short life; and that this purpose may be accomplished, he will never cease to be.

Thus I have attempted to show, that while there is not the shadow of evidence against a future state, there are, entirely aside from the moral government of God, many considerations, which, especially when combined, give a high degree of probability of such a state.

The argument then for the equity of God's moral government over men, as we have presented it, stands thus: the argument, from the fact that God has given men the best law, and from the manner in which he distributes good and evil in this world, with other considerations, is in its nature decisive, provided there is no proof to the contrary. The mere supposition of a future state removes every particle of pretended evidence against the equity of this administration; while with the possibility of a future state, *the necessity* of it, that God may complete that equitable system of moral government which he has obviously begun, places the fact of such a state beyond all rational doubt, or rather forces it on human belief. In addition to these things, we have shown, that aside from the fact of God's moral government, and on other grounds, there is also a high probability of a future state. Our conclusion then is, that there is a future state, in which God can, and therefore will, unfold the equity of his moral administration over men; in other words, *God is administering an equitable moral government.*

## LECTURE V.

Second leading proposition continued, viz.: God administers an equitable moral government.—God administers his moral government under a gracious economy.—Explanation.—Proof 1. The manner in which he administers good and evil harmonizes with such an economy.—2. Distribution of good and evil proves a design to recover.—(a) A virtuous life the happiest.—(b) Gifts of God tend to gratitude.—(c) Natural evils prove the same design.—(d) The present a state of discipline.—(e) The happiness of man in his own power.—(f) Without forgiveness, reclaiming influences vain. God's favor can be secured only on the terms which Christianity prescribes, whether Christianity is or is not from God.

It has been extensively maintained by the advocates of revelation, that it is the exclusive honor of Christianity, not merely that it reveals THE MODE of God's favor to the guilty, but that we are also indebted to it for the belief of even the *possibility* of his favor. How far the human mind, uninstructed by a divine revelation, *would in fact* have pushed its inquiries on this interesting subject, is one question; how far it *could have* done this, is another. The probability is, that the conclusions of the human mind would in fact have been in a high degree doubtful and unsatisfactory, if not against the doctrine of the divine placability. This however might easily be traced to other causes than the want of sufficient evidence of such placability. The aversion of man to the knowledge of God would be a sufficient cause both of imperfect investigations and false conclusions; Christianity may have suggested truths or principles, which would not, though they could, have been discovered without it; and in this way at least we may be able to prove the placability of God, without assuming any of the declarations of Christianity as of divine authority. The demonstration of a problem in geometry is not less independent of Euclid's authority, because he first suggested the constructions on which the demonstration depends.

Nor is there any dishonor done to Christianity by maintaining the sufficiency of human reason to make this discovery; but rather the magnitude of the gift, and the grace that conferred it, are greatly diminished on the contrary supposition.

To Christianity, we may still be indebted for our conclusion, in point of fact, though not of necessity. For although the doctrine of the divine placability might be traced by the light of reason, this by no means shows that revelation was not, in one sense, necessary to the *actual* knowledge or belief of the doctrine. It only shows the ground of that necessity to be, not the want of evidence in the works and providence of God, nor of incapacity in the human mind to discover it, but the perverseness and criminal blindness of the mind itself. And surely the kindness of a benefactor, who secures the actual vision of those who willfully shut their own eyes, is not less conspicuous than that of one who first brings upon them the constitutional calamity of blindness, and afterward removes it. On this principle, we see not only the grace and mercy of God manifested in the most illustrious manner, in giving a revelation to men; for it is a gift to the guilty, made necessary by their own perverseness. On the other, though it may indeed be a gift of goodness, it cannot be a gift of mercy, there being no obligation to believe without it. Nor is this all. On the supposition that the providence of God clearly evinces his placability to guilty man, we have a double testimony to the truth of the revealed declaration, that God is reconciling the world to himself. We see the ways of God, his acts and his doings, to be coincident with his declarations; while on the other supposition, there is palpable contradiction between what he does and what he says. How is the stamp of divinity impressed on God's revelation by such a coincidence.

It is not true however, that all the advocates of Christianity have denied that the divine placability can be discovered from the light of nature. President Edwards, speaking of the outward provision which God makes for the temporal well-being of man, says, "that it is a great argument, that God is not an implacable enemy of mankind, in a settled determination finally to cast them off, and never again to admit them to favor."—

MISCEL. OBSERVATIONS.

The Apostle also, (HEB. ii. 7) has laid down a general principle, which must be decisive on this point with the believer in his authority. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." He also declares, that men, having not a revelation from God, are without excuse for not glorifying him as God.

(ROM. i. 20.) It is not impossible then that the heathen should come to God, or that they should glorify him as God; and of course it is not impossible that they should believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. There is evidence then furnished by the light of nature, that God is a rewarder. True it may be, that I may not be able to exhibit this evidence as it actually exists. That it does exist, admits of no doubt, if the Scriptures be true. With the full persuasion of the fact that such evidence does exist, the propriety of attempting to unfold it cannot be doubted.

The argument for the equity of God's moral government, in a previous lecture, rested on two suppositions, which I proposed to show are matters of fact. This was attempted in the last two lectures in respect to the first supposition, viz., that of a future state.

It now remains to show, that

*God administers his moral government over men under an economy of grace.*

By this, I mean an economy under which, through an atonement, God can, consistently with the perfect equity of his administration, show favor to the guilty. It will be remembered, according to the principles already advanced, that God, to evince the equity of his administration, must show the highest approbation of obedience to his law, and the highest disapprobation of disobedience. By an atonement then, I mean some expedient or provision, by which he shows as high disapprobation of transgression as he would by the punishment of transgressors. Here I admit and maintain, that it would be wholly beyond the power of the human mind to devise or discover any expedient by which this equivalent manifestation of disapprobation could be made. At the same time it is to be remembered, that man is not to limit the conceptions of the omniscient mind by those of his own. Whether man can or cannot see *how*, or by what means an adequate atonement can be made, it would be manifest presumption to affirm that the infinite God cannot. We must admit the possibility of the fact, and if we find good and sufficient evidence, must believe, that though we know not the particular mode that God has devised and adopted, yet that he has some expedient by which he can reconcile the pardon of transgressors with the equity of his moral administration.

In support of the fact, that God administers his moral government under an economy of grace, I remark—

In the first place, *that the manner in which God distributes good and evil in this world, entirely harmonizes with such an economy.* This appears in the general fact, that in distributing good and evil in this world, he evinces no undue or inappropriate feelings toward virtue or vice. That he shows any want of a due regard to virtue, cannot be pretended, on the supposition of a gracious economy. There is no deficiency of reward—no treating of virtuous subjects worse, though all are treated better than they deserve, which perfectly accords with a system of grace.

Again; God evinces no approbation or disapprobation of vice as such. Let us briefly examine the providential facts which can be supposed to bear on this point. We see that the imperfectly virtuous—and such only are the best of men—do, so far as virtue is in its nature connected with self-complacency and peace of conscience, or with any attendant or consequent happiness, reap the appropriate benefits of their imperfect virtue. These are indeed, in some degree, beyond prevention, except by the annihilation of the subject, and are therefore no evidence of God's approbation of sin in good men, even under a merely legal dispensation. Besides, were these benefits of imperfect virtue not experienced by its subjects, how could there be any evidence of God's gracious design to allure men to the practice of virtue, or to restore them to his favor? It is plain, that without them no manifestation of an economy of grace could be made; and instead of being inconsistent with such an economy, they perfectly harmonize with, and are even demanded by it.

Another fact, which may be supposed to bear on the point now before us is, that those who are wholly vicious, even the most abandoned, experience only in a very imperfect degree the appropriate evils of vice in remorse of conscience. In this fact we see, on the part of man, an obvious counteraction of the design of God, as it is decisively manifested in the nature and tendencies of things. The fact therefore that wicked men avoid these evils by thus obviously counteracting these tendencies, is not properly and truly the effect of what God does, or fails to do, except in one respect, viz., that he does not place them in such a condition, or in such circumstances, that *the*

*full effects* of vice, in remorse of conscience, will be felt. But to do so, would be to place them under the full retribution of law. Of course all indications of an economy of grace must cease, and absolute despair of the divine favor must be the consequence. This exemption then, in the case of the wicked, from the full measure of remorse of conscience, while it evinces on the part of God no approbation of vice and no want of disapprobation of it, under an economy of grace, is plainly consistent with, and required by, such an economy.

Further; the enjoyment of various other kinds of good which are not deserved, and exemption from various other kinds of evil which are deserved require consideration. I remark then, that the enjoyment of this good and the exemption from this evil are obviously the effects of those *general laws* whose operation and results are seen to be *wholly independent* of the moral character of man as marking its diversity; and that therefore they do not evince any approbation of vice, or any want of disapprobation of it, on the part of God. If we consider the enjoyments of this class possessed by the imperfectly virtuous man, we shall see that God in bestowing them evinces no approbation of his moral imperfection. For example, such a man by his skill and activity acquires wealth with its numerous advantages and comforts. But it is manifest at once that these blessings are not the appropriate effects of his moral imperfections, but of his skill and industry. To confirm this view of the subject, we see others equally virtuous, either through unskillfulness or by unavoidable providential calamities, the victims of poverty with all its evils. We are unavoidably led therefore to trace this class of enjoyments to other causes than moral character, so far as the present question is concerned. We see clearly that the providential Disposer of events does not, in the distribution of these favors, act on the principle of expressing approbation of imperfect virtue or of vice, but that they result from the operation of those general laws, which act irrespectively of moral character. These laws and their results for aught we can see, must exist, or the appropriate indications of an economy of grace must wholly cease.\*

For the same reason the good things enjoyed by the vicious are no expression of God's approbation of vice. We see in-

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\* BUTLER'S ANALOGY, Part I. Chap. 3, § 4.

deed the industrious knave cultivate the soil and reap the harvest, and also the indolent, be their moral character what it may, leave it uncultivated and live in penury. Hence no one ascribes this difference in providential allotment to diversity of moral character; none regards the prosperity of the skillful and industrious villain, as an expression of God's approbation of his character, but all ascribe it to other causes whose operation and effects are wholly irrespective of moral character. If it here be said, that under the providence of God it is the appropriate tendency of certain vices to procure enjoyments; of avarice for example to secure wealth, of ambition to acquire honor, &c., I reply that these things are not true in any respect which bears on the present subject; for we see avarice, for example, acquiring wealth only when connected with skill and industry, while we find it existing in an equal degree when attended by indolence or unskillfulness, acquiring nothing. Besides, it is apparent that a virtuous regard to wealth, connected with skill and industry, has a direct tendency to secure an adequate, not to say an equal, degree of wealth, and greatly to augment its enjoyments. Indeed it would be easy to show, were it necessary, that under the providence of God the amount of happiness connected with avarice, ambition and sensuality, is far less than results from the opposite virtues. The supposed tendency of these vices is not real, and the acquisition of wealth by avarice, of honor by ambition and of pleasure by sensuality, is no expression of God's approbation of these vices. These enjoyments then are to be traced to other causes—to that operation of *general laws* which is independent of moral character, and which is in no respect inconsistent with God's disapprobation of vice, except that he does not place men in a state of exact retribution; and therefore under an economy of grace they are in no respect inconsistent with his disapprobation. In other words, all that can be called the good consequences of vice, are the unavoidable results of those laws which necessarily pertain to an economy of grace, and therefore harmonize with and are required by such an economy.

Once more. Exemption from that class of evils in the case of the wicked, to which I have referred, is no expression of God's want of disapprobation of vice. This is sufficiently obvious from the principles already advanced. Such exemption or exact retribution is the only conceivable alternative. At

least it must exist to some extent, or the system of general laws which for aught we can see is inseparable from an economy of grace must be abandoned, or man must be placed in a state of exact retribution, which would render such an economy impossible.

Thus it appears that *the mode* in which God distributes good and evil in this world is not inconsistent with the administration of a moral government under an economy of grace, but perfectly harmonizes with such an economy. If now we reflect on the proofs adduced in former lectures, as furnished by the nature of man and the condition in which he is placed, that God is administering a moral government over him in some form, that there is nothing in his providential dispensations at all inconsistent with his adhering to the strict principles of equity in his administration, but clear and satisfactory intimations that he does adhere to them, then we are shut up to one of these conclusions; viz., either God will execute after the short respite of human life a full and exact retribution on every individual of this sinful world; or show that he is administering his government under a gracious economy. If we reflect again on the view of the subject that has now been given, particularly on the fact, that while in all his dispensations God so scrupulously avoids any expression of feelings, which appear to be at variance with a due degree of approbation of virtue, and of disapprobation of vice, every thing in this distribution of good and evil harmonizes with an economy of grace, just as we should suppose it would. We see also a coincidence and harmony which remove all presumption against, if they do not create a presumption in favor of the conclusion, that God is administering an equitable moral government under a gracious economy.

I now proceed to offer more direct evidence on the point before us, and remark—

In the second place, *that God in the distribution of good and evil clearly and decisively evinces a design to restore man to virtue and happiness.*

This design of God is so conspicuous and capable of such extensive illustration and confirmation, and yet to every contemplative mind is so remote from demanding either, that I shall advert only to the leading sources of argument, and in the briefest form possible.

I observe—

(1.) That the providential dispensations of God furnish decisive proof, that in respect to worldly or physical enjoyments, a virtuous course of life is the happiest. Whatever may be the practical estimate of mankind on this question—whatever obscurity the sophistry of the passions or of the heart may throw around it, none fail to perceive and know that intemperance or excess of every kind, *i. e.*, selfishness in all its specific forms of action, greatly impairs our comfort and our happiness on earth. In illustration and proof of the fact, I can only advert to a few obvious instances. Who does not know that honesty is the best policy? By honesty I mean not overt action merely, but that which is dictated by right moral principle. Who does not know the advantages of a virtuous compared with a vicious course of life in respect to health and all our bodily enjoyments, to the possession of wealth and the pleasures it is capable of affording—in a word, to all those blessings which we comprise under the general name of worldly prosperity? Here also might be considered the favor, kindness, honor, influence secured by the one, and the alienation, neglect and infamy entailed by the other; the warm approbation and interest felt in the prosperity of the virtuous, and the indignation occasioned by the triumphs of villainy; and especially the obvious desire of all men to sustain in the eyes of others a character for virtue. How does this last fact show the value of a reputation for virtue as the means of human happiness, and that to insure the results we must sustain the character.

Here it is proper to mention the consequences of virtue and of vice to mankind as subjects of parental and civil governments. These are too obvious to need any specification. They bear however as directly on our argument as any other forms of good and evil, since they are the results of institutions inseparable from our earthly condition, and made so by the appointment of God.

The consequences of a virtuous and vicious course of life to the inner man claim a more particular consideration. I have already had occasion to exhibit the nature and tendency of virtue to give perfect happiness to its subject, and those of vice to produce unqualified misery. I now refer to their actual effects, to some of which I will briefly advert. Consider their influence on our worldly desires and sensual appetites, which if un-

gratified, are the most fruitful source of unhappiness to man. But let the objects of these desires and appetites be what they may, wealth, honor or pleasure, they are never gratified. So long as they are uncontrolled by virtuous principle, they are always excessive, always stronger than the nature and value of their object warrant, and beyond its power to gratify. Lust, ambition, avarice torment the breast which cherishes them, and in their nature are only specific forms of selfishness, deceiving, enslaving and vexing the mind, while in their consequences they are often calamitous and dreadful. The abandoned drunkard is only a full length portrait of uncontrolled appetite. Though avarice, ambition and other lusts do not in each individual instance produce the same degree of evil, yet the aggregate which each has occasioned in this world is scarcely less, perhaps greater, than that which drunkenness has produced. Assuredly we all know that the world is full of unhappiness through the influence of ungoverned and selfish appetite. Now true virtue leads its possessor to love and desire different objects according to their relative and real value. It gives to the greatest and to every inferior good its proper place, and thus removes all excessive desires and with them the cause of inward torment.

Consider now the influence of virtue, as it regulates our passions. No small portion of the unhappiness of man results from envy, anger, peevishness, impatience, revenge. Who can deny their power to annoy and torment the mind? Who can say, as he wishes for enjoyment to-morrow, that he hopes to be angry, fretful, envious, revengeful? Is he who indulges these tempers happy in himself, or is he the man who contributes to the happiness of others, or is he a tormentor of himself and of others? And yet these passions disquiet more or less every human bosom in which true virtue has not broken their dominion. Look now at the man who governs himself. How gracefully he sways the scepter! With what serenity and dignity he passes onward through life! How equable his career! In a world full of jarring elements and violent changes, no clouds of discontent, no whirlwinds of passion, obscure or disturb the steady sunshine of the soul. Like the sun in the heavens, he is far above the storms and tempests that infest and darken and agitate all beneath him.

Similar remarks apply to all those peculiarities of temper

and propensity, which are seriously calamitous to individuals. Is one the victim of that melancholy that throws its gloom over every bright prospect—is he hurried into calamities by indecision and levity of spirit—has he that selfish insensibility that shuts him out from all the sympathies and joys of earthly friendships—has he become the victim of dissipation and wayward prodigality, what other remedy so effectual as to bring him under the influence of virtuous principle? What like this can fix the inconstant, embolden the timid, strengthen the weak, reclaim the abandoned, and save the lost—what else can correct every infirmity, heal every mental disease, and give health and strength and perfection to the soul of man?

But the most terrible of all calamities which shake the soul, is the fear of an avenging God. We know what thoughtlessness and worldliness, absorption in business and pleasure, can do to blind us to this evil. But we know as well that it cannot be wholly avoided by wicked men. Even the hardest in guilt cannot become wholly insensible to these forebodings. Catiline and Nero felt remorse of conscience. The hardihood of a fiend cannot prevent it. There is the impression of a futurity on all human spirits. Every one has a conscience. All know that they have always and deliberately crossed and thwarted the will of another, and that he is no less than an infinite Being; they know, that thus to cross the will of that Being is to offend him, and that they have always done it. They are afraid of death because they are afraid of God. They know that if there is a just retribution to sustain the prerogatives of heaven's Sovereign, and unfulfilled penalties to avenge their violation, they must fall on them. There is an emphatic voice of remonstrance and warning which they cannot quell, and a fearful looking for of judgment they cannot avoid. What is the remedy for these evils, and for those that spring from this alienation of the creature from his Creator—from this aversion of heart to the Almighty Sovereign of heaven and earth, but to return to affection and friendship—what but virtue, religion? I say not here whether God be placable or not. But I ask, what other hope have we, or can we have, if not from conformity to his will? Suppose him a selfish, even a malignant Being, what better can we do than to return to duty; what better, if we would secure the friendship of such a Being, than to do his will. If he is placable—aye, if too he is infinitely good, then

what may we not hope for? The answer is in the feelings of an immortal, who has seen and felt his desert of punishment—of the vengeance of the Almighty, but is now reposing in the bosom of infinite love.

I might dwell here on the advantages of virtue in every condition of human life. In youth, what else can so protect from every danger and evil, and open such bright prospects for future life? In old age, when decrepitude of body and the sinking faculties of the mind seem to open our graves, what else shall console us? Under affliction, how disconsolate were human sorrow, with no appeal but to the unfeeling rock that crushes us. Friends forsake or betray us—all whom we love die—disease assails, which no remedies can reach,—poverty sinks us from affluence to want; death comes—every arm is palsied, every countenance is pale in weakness and despair—what shall sustain us? Nothing but virtue—nothing but religion—nothing but doing the will of God. The love of God, the fixed purpose to do his will, gives hope of his favor. Nothing else can convert our very trials into blessings, and give the hope of a brighter world. This can change the gloom of the dark valley into the twilight of an eternal morning, and the dark grave into the gate of heaven. All else is darkness without light, guilt without hope, fear, remorse, terror, ruin and wretchedness.

Why then are there, in the providence of God, such clear and abundant advantages in the practice of virtue, if it be not his design to allure men to the practice of it? Why does he thus shut them up to virtue, to religion, as their only hope of his favor, if not to assure them that in this way they shall obtain it.

(2.) The blessings of life, contemplated as the gifts of a divine Benefactor, tend by a strong influence, to reclaim men to the practice of virtue. It is philosophic truth, that “the goodness of God leadeth to repentance.” Nor is there any kind of moral influence so powerfully adapted to this end as manifested kindness, which is sure to produce affection in return. This influence reaches the last and lowest stages of human profligacy; for few are so obdurate as not to feel its thrilling efficacy. Nor can I conceive it possible, that an unperverted mind should contemplate this sinful world, in its unworthiness of the favors of its Maker, and also the ceaseless

and abundant communication of blessings to those who deserve only his displeasure; the solicitude with which he watches, the care with which he protects, the compassion with which he relieves, the kindness with which he blesses, and not feel a mighty and an almost irresistible attraction to do the will of such a Benefactor. How is it possible that intelligent beings, qualified as we are, to read the clear intimations of our Maker's will in our constitution and circumstances as moral beings, and made as we are, the constant objects of his more than paternal care and kindness, can doubt or disregard his design to recover us to obedience and to the enjoyment of his favor? What child, in similar circumstances, could question the design of paternal love?

(3.) The natural evils of life justly and soberly estimated bespeak the same design. We no sooner inquire into the end which these evils are fitted to accomplish in respect to man, than we see that it is to restrain men from vice and restore them to virtue. The most striking fact in regard to these evils is, that to a vast extent they result from the wrong state of the heart and conduct of the life. It is suffering in connection with sin, telling us a truth we cannot fail to know, that if we would prevent the effect, we must remove the cause; and far more distinctly and more impressively, that as God loves our happiness he loves also our virtue, and that he will secure the one only by means of the other. So plainly, so forcibly is this great truth taught in the providence of God, that every man knows and feels it in much the same manner as that, if he would avoid the sensation of being burned he must keep himself from the fire. By these evils too the insufficiency and vanity of earthly joys are made obvious in a manner the most impressive to the wayward mind of man. Let him take his lesson from these evils, let him take it from the sufferings, the agonies, the last breath of a dying man, and who would not realize what the world is? In the evils of life we are furnished with abundant opportunities for the exercise of all, and especially of the more difficult and nobler virtues. Even in those evils to which we are subject through what we call inadvertence or rashness, rather than by the execution of any criminal purpose, we find a powerful check to imprudence and temerity, and an impressive lesson of discretion and care, which may be indispensable to our moral well-being. Who can estimate the benefits of

watchfulness to moral beings? The necessity of continued occupation and labor for our comfortable subsistence is also indirectly, and yet in the most important respects subservient to our moral interests. Its single influence to remove us from the temptations of sloth, and to deprive us of leisure to contrive and perpetrate iniquity, is sufficient to show its salutary effects on the conduct of men—to show us that what we are so apt to esteem one of the most intolerable calamities, is one of the greatest of heaven's blessings. It can scarcely be pretended, that the moral and of course all the real interests of a world in which calamities, disease, pain and death possess so benign a tendency and yet produce so little good effect, would be improved by any diminution of these evils; nor can it well be doubted that they evince the design of their author to restrain man from the perversion of his moral nature, and to restore him to virtue and happiness. What would this world be without these? Were there no disappointments, no sufferings, no death, how ferocious, how desperate were human selfishness. It would be a pandemonium rather than a paradise, over whose crimes and woes even God's mercy would despair. In a word then, in all the evils of human life we discern only the discipline and the chastisements of a father's hand, and see only "the graver countenance of his love," intending our profit by making us partakers of his holiness and his favor.

The present state of man is obviously one of trial and discipline, and as such is fitted and designed to form his character to permanent virtue. On this most important topic I have not time to dwell. The illustration of it by Bishop Butler in his *ANALOGY*, (P. I., Chaps. 4 and 5,) to those who will read his remarks, supersedes the necessity of any attempt on my part to exhibit the subject. Not merely the theological student and the Christian, but every man who would understand the true nature and design of his existence in this world, should read and read often, these chapters of Butler.

The general doctrine which he establishes is, that the present world is a state of moral discipline adapted and designed to improve and ultimately to confirm man in virtue and happiness in a future world. This adaptation he has traced in a variety of particulars with such clearness of illustration and force of argument, that the reality of it cannot be doubted by any candid mind. He has not indeed applied this *great fact* to

this particular purpose, but the fact being admitted, who can doubt its application? If it be obvious and undeniable, that the constitution of man and the entire course of God's providential dispensations toward him are *fitted* to reclaim him from sin and to improve and confirm him in virtue and happiness, I ask whence such adaptation, if God does not design to accomplish this end. It is to no purpose to say that in respect to the greater part of men this design is not accomplished. The light of nature leaves the future *particular* results of the present state in many respects unknown and indeterminate. Probation, and with it this course of moral discipline, may also be continued under even more favorable auspices, till the end shall be accomplished in manner and degree worthy of the attributes of its Author. Admit however the fact to be as supposed, it must be traced to the voluntary perversion of the design of God on the part of men, and the perversion of a design is decisive of its reality.

(5.) The happiness of mankind, to a great extent—I may even say their perfect happiness—is placed in their own power. Immeasurably the greatest portion of the miseries of human life are the result of sin and moral imperfection. Suppose that all men were perfectly conformed to the rule of benevolent action, how would this dismal world, as we are often prone to esteem it, and darkened and afflicted as it is by sin and its woes, be cheered and brightened! Let all unkindness between man and man cease; let envy and malice, fraud, cruelty, contention, covetousness, pride, ambition and sensuality come to an end; let these be followed by perfect benevolence, under all its forms of meekness, humility, contentment, self-denial, uprightness, confidence, sympathy, a universal courteousness and cordiality; let benevolence go forth in an uninterrupted train of deeds of beneficence, and liberality pour abroad its gifts, and let gratitude and love reign pure and unruffled in every heart, and these be attended with submission, trust and joy, with the other delightful emotions of piety, and how trivial would be every possible evil—how would this world of sorrow cease to groan, and be transformed into a primeval Eden! How would all nature smile in beauty and pour forth its bounties to bless, and the sunshine of every heart welcome a present God, and tell us of a paradise regained! Does such a fact, in respect to this world of his creatures, bespeak no design of their Maker?

Can an individual doubt, in respect to the part which God desires that he should act? Can such a weight of motive as arises from this amount of good to each and to all, from the obvious practicability of its attainment as placed in their power, be furnished without being designed to move such beings to act accordingly? The question admits of but one answer, and this too plain to be stated. The whole world feels this influence. With it there is a sense of duty and of obligation, which presses hard and almost irresistibly on the human conscience, to embark in this enterprise of blessing the world; and there is a sense of guilt and self-condemnation which fastens on the soul, and compels those who live only to defeat this design of their Maker, to carry a wounded spirit with them through all their pilgrimage. Who can reflect on these things as the result of God's providential dispensations, without regarding them as the ceaseless efforts of his grace to recover man to virtue and to happiness?

There is another fact, which has too important a relation to this part of the argument to be left unnoticed; one which gives a peculiar grandeur and glory to a moral agent—that such is the nature of a moral being, that perfection in character is perfection in blessedness. Moral agency involves, in its very nature, the power so to occupy the mind and bless the moral being with the right object of affection, that any loss of good, and any pain or suffering which are possible in the case, shall be accounted almost as nothing. (I might say, and maintain the position, that it would be in the power of a moral being, if morally perfect, to avoid all suffering, even from omnipotence—at least from every created cause. I have no doubt of this fact, as one given in the true philosophy of the mind.) But I present the position with the slight qualification, *almost entirely to avoid suffering.*

This may be illustrated in many forms, and in the commonest things. How frequently then, when thought and sensibility are wholly given to some object of absorbing interest, do we receive bodily injury without feeling or knowing the fact? Every thing is relative, not only in thought but in feeling. How unworthy in a Cræsus to grieve for the loss of a farthing! Archimedes was so absorbed in the solution of his problem, that he lost his life in the sacking of the city, without being aware of his danger. Soldiers, wounded and bleeding in battle, have

fought on, insensible of their wounds, till they were falling in death. Paul, in his own language, "suffered the loss of all things, and counted them but dung, that he might win Christ;" and considered himself "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things." Martyrs, on the rack and in the fire, have triumphed, with hymns of praise on their lips and heaven in their hearts. The nature of mind explains all this. When then the object that engrosses the mind of a moral being is God—as he is, his designs, the end, the results at which he aims and which he will accomplish—when the heart, the whole soul of a moral being, is fixed as it may be on such an object, and so becomes "filled with all the fullness of God," why should it be thought strange that the tortures of the rack and the fire should leave the perfect blessedness of the mind unimpaired? Such is undeniably the nature of a moral being. By perfection in character he secures perfection in happiness, and becomes incapable of misery! Evil, suffering is possible to man only through his moral imperfection.

I am not saying that perfect holiness will ever exist in this world; experience and observation forbid us to expect it. But I have called your attention to the fact now stated, that I might ask, what is the design of God, in giving existence to moral beings? Has he not placed their happiness in their power—happiness without alloy, absolute and perfect? And what is, what can be his design, but to induce man to attain it; what but to persuade him to do the will and enjoy the friendship of his Creator?

(6.) I only add in support of this conclusion, that if there is no forgiveness with God, and if the proof is decisive that there is none, then all this course of effort to reclaim to obedience must of necessity be vain and worse than in vain. Under the conviction that there is no forgiveness with God, the world would become desperate in rebellion. That God then by the entire course of providence should thus aim to restore man to virtue, and yet authorize and even render unavoidable a conviction which must render all his efforts to reclaim abortive, is incredible. The providential dispensations of God then authorize and require the conclusion that there is forgiveness for the guilty. Indeed in view of what has been said, I ask is there in the entire providence of God any thing in the least degree inconsistent with this great design of his grace—is there any

want of adaptation in the means adopted for its accomplishment; can any course of providential dispensation be conceived more decisively expressive of a design to restore a lost world to duty and to happiness.

I now recur to what I claim to have proved, that God is administering his moral government on the principles of exact equity. In view of this fact we are brought to the unavoidable conclusion, that he will in a future world unfold these principles either in exact retribution or through an atonement. The former is indeed far more probable, than that he has abandoned the principles of eternal justice in his moral government. At the same time that man's present state is simply that of respite from deserved punishment under a merely legal dispensation, must be regarded as highly, even altogether incredible, when compared with the supposition of a gracious economy. In view then of the equity of God's administration, and all those influences to restore man to virtue, and those intimations of forgiveness so conspicuous in this course of his providence, the only conclusion is that God is administering his moral government through an atonement, or under a gracious economy.

One remark in conclusion. You see that if you ever become the objects of God's favor, you must do so on the same ground and on the same conditions which Christianity reveals and prescribes. Without an atonement for your sins, like that which Christianity reveals, there is no hope that you can be forgiven; without repentance for sin, the renunciation of it by doing the will of God, and a cheerful unqualified trust in his pardoning mercy, there is no true happiness for you here or hereafter.

Come then and act up to the dictates of right reason. If you have not proof that Christianity is from God, you have proof that with God there is forgiveness for the penitent sinner, and for none but him. There is, there can be no religion for you but one whose basis is an atonement for sin—a religion which involves a penitent and a contrite heart which hopes for mercy from God as the righteous avenger of sin. Act up then to the dictates of your sober judgment—conform the dictates of conscience to the will of the Being who made you, who in all his providence either smiles to invite you to his friendship, or frowns only to deter you from the guilt and the ruin of sin. Embrace that religion by which the infinite God, your Maker, your Redeemer would bless, and without which he will curse

you forever—that religion which is the perfection of your nature, the end of your existence. If truth is better than falsehood, if happiness is more desirable than misery, if God as your friend is better than God as your enemy, if to meet him as your Saviour is better than to meet him as the avenger of sin, if to go to his judgment-seat fearless and triumphant is better than to go there in despairing terror, if heaven is better than hell, choose this hour with a penitent, humble and steadfast heart, the service of a redeeming God.

## LECTURE VI.

Second leading proposition continued, viz.—God administers an equitable moral government; also, God administers a moral government under a gracious economy.—Proof 3. We must suppose God to administer his government in the way of exact retribution, or through an atonement.—One of these is true, or God is deficient in power, or malignant in intention.—Just conception of Benevolence in God.—What is Justice in God.—Infidels have false views of both.—Dispensations of God's Providence prove him not to be weak.—The equity of a moral government can be consistent with mercy only through an atonement.—Alternative for the unbeliever.

In the preceding lecture, I entered on the proof of the proposition, that God is administering *an equitable* moral government over men under an atonement.

I now resume the same subject, and, with some recapitulation of principles and arguments adduced in former lectures, shall attempt to prove the same thing, by showing—

In the third place, that the only admissible suppositions are, that God is administering his moral government over men either in the way of exact retribution, or through an atonement; and that as the former supposition is wholly inadmissible, it follows that he is administering it under an atonement, I propose to show—

First, That God is administering his moral government over men either in the way of exact retribution or under an atonement; and

Secondly, That he is administering it not in the former, but in the latter mode, or under an atonement.

First. God is administering his moral government over men either in the one or the other of these modes of administration. If he is not, it must be that it is either through want of power, or through an unkind or malignant intention toward individual subjects, or through that excessive lenity which sacrifices the general good to individual happiness.

It is not *through want of power*. On this point no argument, in view of the omnipotence of God, can be necessary.

It is not *through malignant intention*; *i. e.*, not with the design of inflicting punishment hereafter with undue severity, or of

treating his subjects worse than they deserve. This supposition would be wholly gratuitous, since there is not a pretense that in the whole course of his providence there is the least violation of individual rights. Nor would it be merely gratuitous, but against strong evidence to the contrary. Every thing that can bear on the question, in the divine administration, is decisive of benevolence to man; all that can be alleged with the least plausibility, against the exact equity of his government, being the fact that he treats his subjects better than they deserve—a fact surely very remote from authorizing even a conjecture that he will treat them hereafter more severely. Besides, malignity itself, though the manifestation of it might subvert *rightful* authority, cannot violate the principles of equity, in treating the rebellious subjects of God (and such are all men) worse than they deserve, for they all deserve evil. God then cannot be supposed to depart from the principles of exact equity in his moral administration, through malignant intention toward individual subjects.

Again; nor can he be supposed to do this *through excessive lenity*. This, in the form in which it is often presented, is the most plausible of the suppositions which are now to be exploded, and derives its plausibility wholly from the name given it. It is called benevolence, and thus held up to our admiration as the sum and perfection of moral excellence and beauty. And what is more calamitous to the cause of truth, the defenders of the equity of God's government have often conceded, that benevolence is the proper name of the thing intended; denying that the divine moral perfection is comprised in this attribute, even when an apostle has said that "God is love," and maintaining, that justice in God, instead of being only a modification or specific form of benevolence, is another and distinct attribute, dictating and demanding what benevolence forbids.\*

Let us then form some definite conceptions on this most momentous of all questions—*what is benevolence in God?* At least let us distinguish it from what it is not, and from what often bears its desecrated name.† *What then is benevolence in God?*

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\* DR. CHALMERS' BRIDGEWATER TREATISE.

† I am not here deciding that God is benevolent, but only reasoning *ex concessis*; i. e., on the assumption of the infidel, that God is benevolent.

Is any thing which does not disapprove and abhor sin as the supreme evil, and which will not show even the highest disapprobation of it? In opposition to this, we are told that such is not the benevolence of God, and that instead of viewing him in the character of a just and righteous Sovereign, we are to regard him in no other relation than that of a benignant, tender parent, who so delights in the happiness of his family, that to promote it he will sacrifice all that can be called law, justice and equity.

We here come to the stronghold of Infidelity. Let us then ascertain the precise question to be decided. It is not whether God, as a benevolent Being, delights in the happiness of his moral creation, and desires to promote it in the only way in which it can be secured. But can he accomplish that end without the influence of an equitable moral government; in other words, *can God be benevolent without being just?*

*What then is benevolence in God? And what is justice in God?* Benevolence in God is a disposition to secure the highest happiness, and to prevent all misery. Of course it must disapprove, hate, and abhor that which necessarily destroys the highest happiness and tends to produce all misery. But such is the nature and tendency of sin. *What then is justice in God?* It is simply one specific form or modification of benevolence; *i. e.*, in respect to sin, it is benevolence, and nothing but benevolence, disapproving, abhorring, and determining to punish sin in the subjects of his government, as that which undermines his authority, and tends to destroy the highest happiness, and to produce all evil. God then, as a benevolent being, must feel the highest disapprobation and abhorrence of sin. In proportion as he loves happiness and hates misery, he must abhor sin, as that which destroys the one and produces the other. To suppose a benevolent God then, who is not also a just God, is to suppose a benevolent God who is not benevolent.

Nor is this all. God as the governor of moral beings must *show* by his acts that he thus disapproves of and hates sin. He must come before his kingdom with the demonstration of his benevolence in the form of justice, either by a retribution or some equivalent manifestation of his supreme abhorrence of this evil. Words without actions in such a case are no proof in a question of character. In a moral kingdom all results in hap-

piness and misery depend on the moral conduct of its subjects, and that depends on the influences under which they act. Of all these there is one which is absolutely essential; viz., that of the moral governor's supreme approbation of right and supreme disapprobation of every wrong moral action on their part. This is the only influence by which *as a moral governor*, he can move them. Motives as consisting simply in natural good and evil, whether furnished by the perceived nature and tendencies of action, or through the medium of promised good and threatened evil, are not the influence of moral government. This influence arises only from the perfect character of the governor, as manifested in his supreme approbation of right and supreme disapprobation of wrong moral action. If he has these feelings then he will manifest them by his acts. To suppose otherwise, is to suppose him not to use the most perfect means for the most perfect end; to give no evidence of his real character and of his right to govern—no proof that he is not the friend and patron of iniquity, none that he is entitled to the confidence or submission of his subjects. Nay more, it is to suppose him to give decisive proof to the contrary; for in such a case, if he had the feelings of supreme approbation of right and supreme disapprobation of wrong action he would manifest them. The good of his kingdom demands it. Benevolence dictates and imperiously requires it, as the necessary means of the best end. If then he does not manifest these feelings, the proof is decisive against their existence, and of course that he is not worthy of the confidence and submission of his subjects, and not entitled to the throne.

Were the whole moral universe a heaven of joy and rapture, what security for its continuance even for an hour?

And why under the government of a selfish deity, will not all good and all hope terminate at any moment in the agonies and woes of sin? What sort of obedience to God would that be, secured by such influences, when there is no ground of confidence, respect or love furnished in his character? And what such ground could there be in the character of a God whose so-called benevolence dispenses with all justice and all equity, which does not supremely abhor, but actually patronizes and befriends, protects and rewards iniquity? Than that sort of benevolence, there is nothing worse *in point of principle* in Satan himself. Adorn it with what tender names you will,

of parental love and kindness, you would actually despise it in an earthly parent or a civil magistrate, and it ought to be and would be despised in God himself by all his intelligent creation. It sinks all that is venerable and awful in heaven's sovereign as a God of benevolence, guarding the general good of his kingdom at the sacrifice of individual good, not into that which is lovely, but into that which is contemptible. Such is the God whom Infidelity worships, cheating itself with names and words, while in the incense it offers to a fancied deity, it despises the object of its own adoration. Nay, rather it forgets that the real object of its homage is and must be in principle, a being of absolute selfishness or infinite malignity. I only ask, is it possible, is it conceivable, THAT A BENEVOLENT IS NOT ALSO A JUST GOD? Can there be a benevolent God who does not supremely abhor and who will not show that he abhors the worst thing in the universe? Can a perfectly benevolent God be supposed to depart from the principles of eternal righteousness? Will he despoil his high and inviolable sanctuary of all its sacredness—his dominion of all its majesty? Will he yield to that excessive lenity or indulgent tenderness which will darken all his glories—will he by this most fearful act of infinite malignity fill his moral creation with terror and dismay?

Let us now briefly appeal to the providence of God. Here let it be remembered, that God must be supposed either to be strictly just as a moral governor, or to be so concerned for the happiness of individual subjects, that he consents for their sake to sacrifice the equity of his moral government, and with it the highest happiness of his moral kingdom. Do then the dispensations of his providence authorize us to ascribe to him, even in conjecture, the latter character? Why—if he relinquishes the character of a righteous moral governor for that of an indulgent parent—does he give such clear and decisive indications of his supreme approbation of virtue and disapprobation of vice? Why does he render it the most manifest of all truths, that there is no way in which man can secure his own perfect happiness, or be safe against perfect misery, except by the practice of virtue? Why has he created beings whose very nature and condition on the least reflection, bring before the mind the everlasting distinction between right and wrong moral action, and constrain them to feel that by the latter they are defeating

the high end of their own creation, and doing the most palpable violence to the will of an infinite Creator? Why if reluctant to make man ultimately as miserable as strict equity demands—why if thus indifferent to the rights of the public, is there no instance of individual, or at least of public injustice? Why, if God is all tenderness, does he so distinctly express his displeasure toward iniquity in the various ways of his providence, and actually produce such fearful forebodings of a coming retribution, that the heart of every man trembles while going on in iniquity—that every man is afraid of death because he is to meet God? Why is it that no error, artifice or system of opinions has ever been devised, adequate to quell the dread and the disturbance which the wicked feel when they think of the Sovereign of heaven? Why is it that Universalism, Infidelity, Atheism have so often cried for his mercy when summoned by death into his presence?

Advert to another class of evils; I mean those which God brings on men, not as the natural consequence of crime, but in the exercise of his high and irresponsible sovereignty, such as those which result from disease and pestilence. Is there not a cause? Who can suppose that they are brought on moral beings without reference to their character? Who that knows that he is a sinner, a rebel against God, can feel these evils in his own person without the reflection, if not that he deserves them, at least that God is not too good to inflict the extremest evils on his creatures? What is their design but to tell us of a degree of displeasure, which confines not its expressions in evil to the direct natural results of wrong doing, and that he has still other and more fearful treasures of wrath for the workers of iniquity? What if all the sufferings and death which have been endured on the face of this earth since its creation, could be arrayed before the eye in present and distinct vision? What if all the sorrows and pains, and sighs and tears, and all the distress by sickness, pestilence, famine, earthquakes, shipwrecks, wars, the rack, the gibbet, and the fire—what if all the weeping widows and orphans, all the lamentation and mourning of parents and children, of husbands, wives, brothers, sisters—what if all the massacres, the shrieks, agonies and groans of the dying—the seas of human blood and the mountains of human corpses—what if these scenes of woe and horror which have been witnessed on earth could be brought before us, and

all be acted and felt over again as a present reality under our direct inspection. How should we be overwhelmed, and what should we think of that God who made and governs such a world as this? With such a spectacle of terror before us, should we reflect on nothing but his tenderness, and with our consciousness of guilt expect nothing but favors from his hands? What does the history of this world disclose, if not visible marks and traces of the vengeance of God upon it, in every age and every hour? And do these bespeak mere indulgence? Surely whatever other weakness or inconsistency may be ascribed to God, nothing is more inconsistent with the whole course of his providential dealings with men, than the weakness or inconsistency of excessive lenity. On whatever other basis man may rest his hopes of God's favor, that of mere tenderness, it would seem, must be the last. The entire history of his providence furnishes not an instance of kindness at the expense of justice, but discloses to all who read the record, a severity of dispensation which proclaims that a sovereign law-giver and a righteous judge is on the throne of the universe. We do, we *must* see a God frowning at sin. And if amid these frowns we also witness the smiles of mercy, still they are too dark and awful to authorize the hope of his favor through the mere relentings of tenderness.

We are then brought to the conclusion, that God is administering an equitable moral government over men, either according to the principles of exact retribution or through an atonement. In other words, God will show his supreme disapprobation of sin, either by inflicting unmingled and endless misery on a world of transgressors, or by some other expedient which shall equally manifest such disapprobation.

Solemn and tremendous as is this alternative, it is and must be real; and from it there is no escape, according to any principles of correct reasoning. The benevolence of God, if we assume it as the infidel does—his providence, in all its facts and principles—every consideration that bears on the subject, conducts to our conclusion; while no fact, no principle, furnishes the least opposing evidence. Deny our conclusion, and you deny the perfect justice of God; deny his justice, and you must deny his benevolence. Admit then, that he is a God of absolute selfishness, of infinite malignity, or admit his benevolence, and with it his supreme abhorrence of sin, and the mani-

festation of that abhorrence, either in an exact retribution hereafter or through an atonement.

This brings us to the question, *in which of these only possible or conceivable modes, is God administering his moral government over this sinful world?* This leads me to say,

Secondly, That he is administering it, not in the former mode, but under an atonement.

This position is fully sustained by two facts and a principle. The facts are these: the first, *that God is administering an equitable moral government over men;* the second, *that the entire course of his providence bespeaks his design to restore man to duty and to favor.* The principle is, *that the perfect equity or justice of a moral governor, can be reconciled with mercy to transgressors only through an atonement.*

In respect to the first of these facts, we have seen that God administers a moral government over men; that he does it through the medium of the best law; and that this fact, uncounteracted by any opposing evidence, is decisive proof of the perfect equity of his administration; that instead of furnishing any opposing evidence, the entire course of his providence shows him, as it were, most scrupulously avoiding every shadow of injustice—discloses the true tendency of obedience to his will, to bless, and of disobedience, to ruin the soul of man forever, and exhibits him in that severity of dispensation which comports only with the majesty of a sovereign lawgiver and righteous judge. We have seen that he has destined the subjects of his government to a future state of being, thus furnishing an opportunity for the perfect display of the equity of his administration; while the manner in which he removes them to that world tells of such a result, in the most fearful forebodings of every departing spirit; and that whether we assume and reason from his benevolence or from the facts of his providence, no other supposition can for a moment be admitted, than that of the perfect equity of his government. Shut up then to this conclusion on the one hand, we see at the same time on the other, the most satisfactory indications of his benignant design to restore man to duty and favor. The same course of providential dispensations, along with the lessons it gives of the equity of his administration, shows not less clearly the lessons of his mercy to the penitent transgressor. Every thing, as we have seen, entirely harmonizes with such an economy, and

is fitted and adapted to the end of bringing man back to his duty and the friendship of his Maker; every motive which can reach and move a rational, voluntary being, whether derived from his present or future well-being; every thing in the form of manifested kindness and good-will on the part of a divine Benefactor; every thing in the form of paternal chastisement, in the nature and condition of man, adapted and designed to form his character to permanent virtue; his happiness placed so completely in his own power as a moral being—every thing to invite to obedience, and to awe from transgression, which is conceivable in such a system; while all these adaptations, influences, efforts to reclaim, must be worse than in vain—must evince even malignity of intention on the part of the Creator, if he has no design to forgive and to save.

With these things in view, let us now advert to the *principle*, viz., that the *perfect justice of God, as a moral governor, can be reconciled with mercy to transgressors only through an atonement*. This is the impossibility, already sufficiently illustrated, that God should be either benevolent or just, without manifesting his supreme abhorrence of sin. I need not say, that it were easy for infinite wisdom to devise, and infinite power to execute, a plan by which such a manifestation shall be made, in the pardon of transgressors. Here then let us judge, whether God has not adopted some plan by which the principles of eternal justice are consistent with favor to a revolted world. What else can be true, or even supposed possible, but that he is administering a perfectly equitable system of moral government over men under an economy of grace?

I say not here what will be the actual results of this economy in a future world. All that the light of nature can give on this point is at most, the general conclusion, that these results will be such as will accord with that benignity of design so conspicuous in his providential dealings. The great fact itself however, appears, to my own mind, to be shown by all the evidence of which the nature of the case admits. If it be possible to manifest to rational beings the adoption of such a system without a revelation, *i. e.*, by merely providential dispensations, I see not why the evidence actually furnished of A JUST GOD AND A SAVIOUR, does not demand the most unhesitating belief.

To conclude. If these things are so, we see on what ground

Infidelity must stand. The infidel must believe either in a malignant Deity, or in a future exact retribution of this sinful world, or in the great cardinal fact of Christianity, viz., *that there is an atonement for sin*. Let us look at this. If the infidel denies a full, just and exact retribution of this sinful world, and also an atonement for sin, then he is shut up to the admission of a selfish, malignant Deity. He may call him *benevolent*; but it is a name without the reality. Such a God is not benevolent, for he is not just. He is unjust. He is regardless, reckless of the greatest happiness of his moral creation—unjust to his kingdom—malignant.

Again; if now the infidel still denies an atonement for sin, and admits the benevolence of God, then he is shut up to the admission of a full and exact retribution of this sinful world in utter and endless misery. On his own premises there is no escape. If any thing is true in moral reasoning, it is this: that a benevolent God, as a moral governor, and thus the guardian of his kingdom, must feel and must express an abhorrence of the supreme evil of sin, and must make that expression either by a full and exact retribution or in some other way; *i. e.*, through an atonement. The infidel denies an atonement. The consequence is inevitable. Every subject of God's moral government is a transgressor, and doomed, without hope, to utter and endless misery. Does he say, this is in itself incredible, impossible? I reply, it is neither. The destruction of such a world as this for its rebellion against God, may be less, in comparison with his universal kingdom, than the penalties which every benevolent parent inflicts on his children compared with the end of their infliction; it may be, as I have said, an infinitesimal compared with unlimited vastness. The infidel then, on his present premises, is compelled to admit, that every human being is doomed to everlasting destruction. And if he will adopt such premises, let him abide the conclusion. He professes to reason. Let him see that he adopts premises that throw the midnight of despair over a guilty world; premises, which give only "a certain fearful looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation."

Again; if the infidel denies that such a retribution awaits this sinful world, and still maintains that God is benevolent, then, as a rational man, he must admit an atonement, even that of Christianity. If God is benevolent, he is also just; and

if his justice is not manifested and vindicated by a future just retribution, then it must be by an atonement. But will any rational man admit an atonement and reject that which Christianity reveals? Let him ask, how—by what other means or expedient—can a sin-avenging God become merciful to transgressors of his law? How can he make a manifestation of his abhorrence of sin equal to that of turning a rebellious world into hell? How can the throne of eternal justice be upheld in all its strength and glory, and the defied penalties of sin be averted from the guilty? Here, all is mystery and utter darkness. Before this problem, the intellect of man retires baffled, and confounded. No answer can be given; no conception can be formed. Christianity—Christianity alone, gives the solution. Christianity alone reveals a triune God, and shows us his throne upheld by the man that is also the eternal Logos, and a guilty world redeemed. Christianity thus solves the problem which God alone can solve. Christianity, on this most momentous of all subjects, and with this sufficient proof of its divine origin, removes all rational doubt, satisfies all rational inquiry, and gives all rational assurance. If there is an atonement for sin, then we safely affirm, it is and must be that which Christianity describes. It is the only adequate atonement conceivable by the human mind. It is this alone which can still the agitations of conscious guilt, and bring relief to the laboring heart of sinful man. In its very nature and perfection, it bears the impress of God as its author. And can man, reasoning from his necessities as a sinner against a just and holy God, and admitting the fact of an atonement for sin, deny the atonement of Christianity? No man has done—no man ever will do it. The only alternative here is, either *no* atonement, or the great atonement of the son of God.

You see then what ground the infidel—every man that reasons from any possible premises in the case, must take. He must either deny the benevolence of God,—*i. e.*, believe in a selfish, malignant deity, or in a benevolent God, with a future just retribution of this sinful world; or he must receive Christianity, with its great atoning sacrifice.

And now, what are the facts? The infidel rejects all atonement for sin. He rejects the doctrine of a future retribution, and, of course, actually lands in the belief of a selfish, malignant deity! I know indeed, that the words will not suit him; that

he calls God benevolent, and loves to dwell on the goodness, and the kindness, and the tenderness of the Creator toward his creatures, as if he could cause an infringement on the Godhead by mere words, or compliment it with tender epithets out of its own divinity, and so make a benevolent, an unjust God. Such is however the fact, in his own conceptions. He conceives of a God who will sacrifice the majesty of law, the glory of his moral dominion, and the happiness of his moral creation, in tenderness to rebels; a God, who stands before his intelligent universe the friend and patron of iniquity. This is the real, the only conception which he can form. It is no exaggeration, no caricature; it is given in his avowed creed of *a benevolent God who is not just*. In the sincerity of my heart then I say it; and if the infidel would reflect on his own conception, he would see that the real object of his homage, instead of a perfect God, is a perfect demon. Man, sinful, immortal man, has nothing better to confide in, than the tender mercies of an infinite fiend!

And now permit me to add; Christianity is false or Christianity is true. If false, then you must either believe in a selfish malignant deity, and consent to dwell forever amid the darkness and terrors of his fearful dominion, or you must believe in God's benevolence and, abide the more fearful doom of his just and eternal indignation. If Christianity is true—I had almost said, if it can be true—if there is but a slight probability of its truth—if it reveals what the intellect of man could never have conceived—tells us of an adequate and perfect atonement for sin under the government of a holy and just God; and proffers pardon and life where otherwise all is hopeless guilt and death for eternity; if it thus harmonizes with, illustrates, unfolds, confirms the clearest intimations of his providence—then what is Christianity, and what is Infidelity? Christianity with only these characteristics comes as a messenger from God with God's credentials. It conducts us into the very sanctuary of his glories, where justice reigns and mercy triumphs in still brighter splendor. In this holy of holies it points us to the great and perfect sacrifice for this world's redemption, and shows us without a veil of mystery, A JUST GOD AND YET A SAVIOUR. Infidelity sneers and prefers a malignant deity. The infidel rejects the message, denies the proof, despises the sacrifice, and seals his own damnation. Who that has reason and will use it, will reject

Christianity for the darkness, the terrors of Infidelity? Who that has reason, will reject Christianity, with its consolations in time, its prospects for eternity, its deliverance from sin and hell, its regions of immortality and joy—its God—its Saviour? The gospel—the gospel—how unquestionable—how sure its announcement of its own character—“glad tidings of great joy to all people!”

## LECTURE VII.

Third leading proposition: God governs with rightful authority.—This proved by his benevolence.—Different opinions in respect to the method of proving his benevolence.—If it cannot be proved by the light of nature, it cannot be proved at all.—The Scriptures assert and assume that this benevolence is manifest by the light of nature.

To establish the leading proposition before us; viz., that *God is administering a perfect moral government over men*, it is necessary, as we have already said, to prove the equity of his administration and also his rightful authority. The former I have already attempted. To prove the latter, it is necessary to show his competence and also his disposition to govern in the best manner. His *competence* is proved by showing that he is a being of infinite knowledge and power. His *disposition* to govern in the best manner, which involves also his perfect or infinite benevolence, now claims our consideration.

Whether God is a being of perfect benevolence, is seen at once to be one of the most momentous of all the inquiries which can engage the human mind. It is not difficult for men to believe in what they may regard as the goodness of God, under an entirely false conception of its nature; nor is it uncommon that men believe it, even with some just views of what it is, without ever having seen or heard or formed an argument by which it can be proved. I need not say of what high concern it is to us, not only that we have a right apprehension of the nature of God's goodness, but that our faith in its unchangeable reality rest on evidence which can be weakened by no sophistry, and which can be shaken by no skepticism. We have seen how prone the human mind is to form fundamentally false views of the nature of God's goodness, and to hazard all the interests of its immortal being on its own vain imaginations—mere pictures of its fancy.

I must be allowed to say, that I have not met with any *proof* of this divine attribute, or any argument from reason in support of it, which would stand the test of a close logical scrutiny. Nor can it be pretended that there is such an argument fully drawn out and formally maintained in the Scriptures. Am I then asked, whether I suppose that the faith in God's moral perfection, of the pious, of those in humble life as well as of the great, the wise, and the learned, has had no sufficient basis or warrant? That is another question, and one to be answered with a decided negative. It is one thing for the mind to perceive proof or evidence, or even to go through a process of reasoning which fully sustains a conclusion, and another to state that process; and especially so to state it, that it shall be exposed to no objections which that mind cannot answer. As the knowledge of what a man is, what a tree is, what government is, what law is, what virtue is, is different from that which enables one to state with exact precision what he knows, so for the minds of men universally, to apprehend the evidence of God's goodness in such a manner as to authorize and demand their faith, and to be a just ground of condemnation if they disbelieve, is a very different thing from being able to present in formal statement, all the premises and principles on which a just conclusion depends, with such logical precision, that the argument when stated, shall be unanswerable. How much false reasoning has been used by great and good men in support of truth! How many just conclusions have been adopted and acted upon, even with reason, for which men can give no reason!

The difficulties which have been supposed to embarrass the great question now before us, have led some minds of singular acuteness and power to conclude, that there is no proof from any source, or from all sources combined, that God is good. Some have maintained, that the benevolence of God can be proved, both from the light of nature and from revelation, as separate and independent grounds of argument; others, that if proved at all, the argument must be derived chiefly; others, that it must be derived wholly from revelation; and others still, that a conclusive argument can be derived exclusively from the light of nature, and that otherwise the divine benevolence cannot be proved at all.

It has been a question with some, whether it be of any impor-

tance that the two sources of proof be separated from each other. That they should frequently be combined, especially in popular exhibitions of the subject, I believe; that having evinced the benevolence of God, by satisfactory proof from the light of nature, we can and may augment it by appealing to revelation, I see no reason to doubt. At the same time, I am convinced that we must find satisfactory proof of the benevolence of God from the light of nature, before we can appeal with the least propriety or force to revelation; and that of course the light of nature must be resorted to, as furnishing a separate and independent ground of argument. If this be not done, then we must come to the revelation of God without proof of his moral perfection, either assuming his *veracity*, which is only one form of his benevolence, and therefore involves the very thing to be proved, without which we are forbidden by the laws of evidence to believe his declarations. The bearing of these considerations upon heathenism, and deism or infidelity, are sufficiently obvious to show the importance and necessity of producing from the light of nature, if possible, the universal and unhesitating belief of the perfect benevolence of the Creator. To the mind not fully convinced of the goodness, and consequently of the truth or veracity of God, the questions, whether God has actually given a revelation to the world, and what that revelation contains, must be comparatively trivial and uninteresting inquiries.

Beyond this, if there is no proof of God's moral perfection from the light of nature, then revelation itself finds the human mind free from all obligation to him, which results only from these prior proofs, and which imparts such high concern to the inquiry, whether such a being has given to man the oracles of eternal truth. How entirely different the questions are, whether a perfect God has given a revelation to the world, and whether it can only be claimed to be a revelation from a being whose moral perfection can be legitimately doubted or denied.

Besides, if God, in his works of creation and providence, manifests his goodness to the clear apprehension of his moral creatures, who can doubt their obligation to mark his footsteps here, and to adore and worship with grateful praise amid these displays of his Godhead? Who shall refuse "to look through nature up to nature's God," because he has in his revelation

manifested the same glories in still brighter splendors? If he has opened two books before us, why should we not learn from both what God is? Especially, if the light of nature furnishes the only proof of the moral perfection of the Creator in such a respect, that without it, none which is sufficient and satisfactory can be furnished by revelation, then, in exploring the field of evidence spread out before us in the works of God, the most diligent research becomes us.

In expressing the opinion that the benevolence of God cannot be proved from revelation, I would not be understood to affirm, that when the fact is once fairly proved from the light of nature, additional evidence in support of it cannot thus be derived. When I am convinced, on sufficient grounds, of the excellence of another's character, I reasonably regard those acts which may proceed from benevolence as actually proceeding from, and as additional proofs of it. Nor would I be understood to say, that no aid can in any respect be derived by us from a revelation, in the investigation of this subject. This is quite possible. Thus, without assuming the veracity of God, which, as I have said, would be assuming the thing to be proved, the revelation may contain propositions whose truth the mind perceives, independently of their divine authority. These propositions may furnish the premises of a conclusive argument. The argument however, would still be one from reason, as truly as a demonstration of a problem in geometry, though it depends on the definitions of Euclid. A revelation may even contain the same argument which is furnished by the light of nature. In this case also, it would be, strictly speaking, one from reason, though reason would never have discovered it without a revelation.

I shall now attempt to show,

*That the benevolence of God cannot be proved by any argument derived merely from revelation, as distinguished from an argument derived from the light of nature.*

Every proof on this subject, derived merely from revelation, must depend on some declaration or declarations of its Author. These must be supposed to consist of those in which he directly declares his own moral perfection, or of those in which he asserts such designs and doings, as in their own nature shall be proof of his moral perfection. In neither case however, can mere declarations be relied on, any further than we assume

and rely upon the veracity of the author. But veracity in God, in the only form in which we can rely upon it in him, is only one form of his benevolence, and necessarily implies it. To assume his veracity then, is to assume his benevolence, which is the very thing to be proved. Or thus: if we rely on the veracity of the Author of revelation, we must do so either with reason or without reason. If with reason, then we have proof of his veracity, and of course of his benevolence, prior to, and independently of his declarations. If we rely on his veracity, prior to and independently of his declarations, without reason, then we gratuitously assume his veracity, and of course his benevolence; that is, we assume the very thing which is to be proved. If then the benevolence of God cannot be proved from the light of nature, it cannot from revelation, and therefore cannot be proved at all.

The contrary however, has been strenuously maintained; and it may give more satisfaction if we examine some of the grounds of this claim. These, so far as I deem them worthy of notice, are the three following, viz.:

1. It is claimed that the declarations of any being, and therefore of God, are entitled to credit, on the general principle which gives credibility to testimony.

2. It is claimed, that any being may establish, and that God has established his character for veracity, on the ground of the uniform coincidence of his declarations with facts—as that many of the historical facts of Scripture are confirmed by profane history; that all its predictions, promises, and threatenings, have in due time been fulfilled; and that in this way we have a full confirmation of the veracity of their author.

3. It is claimed, that the Scriptures themselves, in their own character, or in the nature of what they assert concerning God, his designs and doings, especially the giving of his perfect law, with the pure and holy precepts of the gospel, the grand scheme of redemption, and his purpose to counteract and overrule all evil for the production of the highest good of the universe, furnish abundant and decisive proof of the benevolence of God.

Now it is obvious, that the question at issue depends, in each of these modes of reasoning, on the veracity of the witness. If this be not presupposed and assumed, there can be

no argument or proof in either case. What I claim then is, that the assumption of the veracity of the witness is, as the case is now presented, made on grounds which are wholly insufficient, and in a manner forbidden by the laws of just reasoning.

And first in regard to testimony, and the general principle of its credibility. It is so obviously for the interest of men, in most cases, to speak truth rather than falsehood, that there is a strong and convincing probability that, in most cases, they actually do so. With this probability the results fully accord; for men speak truth in a vast majority of instances. A declaration, with these presumptions in favor of its truth, is what we call credible testimony, and what we justly esteem, in many cases, even from a stranger, good and conclusive evidence. But how is it, when presumptions against its truth, and not in its favor, exist? If he who testifies is justly presumed to be liable from a regard to his own interest to do so falsely, it destroys the weight of his testimony. Hence no man is allowed to testify before any civil tribunal in his own case. "If I bear witness of myself," said the Saviour, "my witness is not true."

Here then we have one principle which utterly vitiates all the supposable proof of God's benevolence, which is derived merely from revelation, whether he bears witness of himself in asserting it, or in the form of asserting other facts as proofs of this. Who does not know how well it comports with the character of the most selfish and ambitious of rulers, even of the veriest tyrants, to boast of their benevolent designs, and to parade their schemes of public utility for the advancement of their selfish purposes? Can we then rely with confidence, and this in a case in which our highest interests are pending, on the veracity and so on the mere testimony of another, when he may be under a powerful inducement to testify falsely? But the case before us is much stronger. It is one in which, if real benevolence exist, proof of it must also exist, and yet does not. It is maintained on one side of the present question, that God as the Creator and providential governor of the world, furnishes by his acts no proof of his benevolence. Now such a fact, if it be a fact, is entitled to something more than a mere negative influence in the argument. It is a direct positive proof against his benevolence which sets aside every possible declara-

tion of it. To what purpose would a parent whose treatment of his dependent offspring for a long course of years, had given no proofs of his love, make and repeat assertions of his kindness? It is the hypocrisy which unmasks itself by saying to the naked and to the hungry, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," and giveth nothing. "As the body without the spirit is dead," so benevolence without works, as truly as faith, is dead also.

This mode of reasoning applies not less to the Creator than to his creatures. That he should give existence to such a world as this, and govern it by his providence for thousands of years, and yet furnish no convincing evidence of his goodness to the pensioners of his bounty—that the most sincere and humble inquirer into the ways of his providence should be unable to find the least trace of goodness—one solitary footstep of benevolence to call forth his gratitude and praise—this surely were enough not merely to authorize doubt and suspicion, but it would amount to a direct and positive proof against his goodness. If he is good, why are there no proofs of his goodness in his acts? Why is the wide field of his providence thus barren of all that can bespeak the love of the Creator to his own creatures? What has employed the resources of his Godhead, while his dependent offspring have been thus forsaken and unblessed? Actions speak louder than words. His providence tells his character, and is a full revelation of a selfish heart. And is such evidence to be set aside by his own testimony to his own excellence? Is such the character of the being, revealed by the most decisive of all manifestations, confirmed by the most unquestionable of all proofs, by acts and doings, by his treatment of the myriads of his dependent creatures since time began; and is he to command our confidence by mere assertions of his goodness? Are mere words to be believed? Are creatures with such an experience at the hands of their Creator, to be required to render to him the homage of their gratitude and praise? Every voice would be dumb, every heart would be cold. And yet on no other basis have many able divines rested the proof of God's benevolence.

But we are told that God has established his character for veracity on the ground of the uniform coincidence of his declarations with facts. With our authorized and habitual convictions that the Author of the Scriptures is a being of perfect

goodness and truth, our belief in his testimony is justly confirmed and strengthened by tracing the exact and uniform coincidence between his declarations and facts. But how would it be, provided we had no antecedent reason to believe that he would speak truth rather than falsehood; and especially if we had good antecedent reason for denying his moral perfection, and with it his veracity? Though we suppose a coincidence between facts and the declarations of another to any indefinite extent, still there are other ways in which he may wholly forfeit a character for veracity. There is truth in the vulgar saying—that he who will steal will also lie. A man may uniformly speak truth from selfish considerations, and yet in other ways evince that want of moral principle which destroys all ground of confidence in his veracity, and pre-eminently in his declarations of the excellence of his own character. Be the coincidence then between facts and the declarations of God what it may, still the principles already stated apply. In the case supposed, he testifies in his own case, while were he perfectly benevolent, there would be proof of his benevolence from his works. These considerations, especially the latter, set aside all evidence from his mere assertions that he is good, and even prove that he is not good. This is obviously, entirely overlooked by those who maintain, that the coincidence of his declarations with facts is proof of his veracity. They assume that a failure to manifest his goodness by his works, is no proof that he is not good. The more however we should reflect on such a fact, if it were a fact, the stronger would be its impression. For how could this world of creatures thus cast away from the favor and affection of their Maker—thus doomed to an exile and an orphanage in which no tokens of paternal love should gladden their existence—how *could* they confide in the character of such a Father?

But it is said, that in his revelation God declares his will in the form of his perfect law, as well as the great design of redeeming mercy, and the purpose to render evil, even moral evil, the means of the highest possible good to his creation. Be it so. But then it is his mere declaration which has no higher claims to our confidence than any other. As testimony in respect to his own particular designs, it is his testimony to his own excellence. It is his own testimony of his unexecuted will as a lawgiver, and of his unexecuted purposes as a providential

disposer of events. And not only so,—it is testimony designed to evince his goodness, when, according to the supposition on which we reason, there is no proof of his goodness from his works; and when therefore as we have shown, there is decisive proof that he is not good; and of course when no confidence is due to the supposed testimony.

But let us briefly advert to the particular facts which are now alleged. And to take the last first; it is said that the Scriptures teach that moral evil in the world is the necessary means of the greatest good, and will be overruled for the production of this result; and great, even the chief reliance in this argument has been placed on this assumption. Without here proposing a full examination of this gratuitous assumption, I shall simply say that the Scriptures teach no such dogma; and that if they did, it would prove that their author, in preferring the worst kind of action to the best, is himself the worst of beings; is insincere as a lawgiver, the friend and patron of sin, and an enemy to the happiness of his own creation. But it is said that in his revelation God has given to men the best law. This is admitted; and further, that the act of giving such a law is good and sufficient evidence of his goodness were it uncounteracted by opposing evidence. He has given the best law. But how shall we know that this law is *a real expression of his will*, especially if, as it is also said, he prefers, all things considered, wrong to right moral action? The act of giving the best law is no proof of his benevolence, unless it be also proved that the law is a real expression of his will, of his preference of right to wrong moral action, all things considered. But it would not be out of character for a deceiver to resort to the artifice of giving the best law for the very purpose of deception; and especially when it is supposed as it now is, that all his other acts and ways of providence fail to prove his goodness and so prove that he is not good, how can we doubt that the act is done for the purpose of deception? I am not saying that the well attested fact that God has revealed the best law can have no place in any argument for his goodness, but in view of the supposed fact that there is no other proof of his goodness from his works of creation and providence, that the giving of the best law can furnish no proof of his goodness, but is rather to be viewed as an artifice of deception.

But it is said that God in his revelation declares his great design of redeeming mercy. This is of course admitted. But it is still simply his own declaration, and the same objections lie against this as against all others considered as proofs of his goodness. The excellence of this scheme is obvious and undeniable. But what does it amount to but proof of wisdom to devise the most perfect means for the most perfect end, while it so greatly fails to accomplish under the government of its author, the end to which it is adapted, and for which it is professedly devised? And under this aspect, how is it to be regarded when it is supposed that the works of his providence decisively disprove his goodness, except as another artifice to deceive his dependent creatures?

The general principle on which the preceding discussion has proceeded is, that works, not words, are the legitimate evidence on a question of character. Though cases occur in which declarations are coincident with conduct, and augment the proof of moral rectitude, and though they may be entitled to credit, when they can be supposed to be made only with a benevolent design; yet in all cases in which the declarations may be fairly traced to some selfish or sinister design, and especially in which benevolence or moral rectitude, if it exist, will manifest itself in conduct and does not, the proof is decisive against the existence of such a principle.

“The word of God itself,” says President Edwards, “is no demonstration of the supreme distinguishing glory of God any otherwise than by the works of God, and that in two ways. First, as we must have the perfections of God first proved by his works, in order to know that his word is to be depended on. Secondly, as the works of God appealed to and declared in the word of God, declare and make evident that divine greatness and glory which the word declares. There is a difference between declaration and evidence. The word declares, and the works are proper evidence of what is declared.”—MISCELL. OBSERVATIONS.

If these remarks are just, then whatever illustrations or additional evidence of the divine goodness may be furnished by those works and designs of God, which are declared in his word, when we have acquired confidence in his moral perfection by a contemplation of his works of creation and provi-

dence, it is plain that without this previous ground of confidence, the word of God can furnish no sufficient proof that he is good.

The Scriptures also fully sustain the views which have now been taken of this important subject. First, in demanding the faith of men in Christianity, they always either assume on sufficient grounds the moral perfection of God, or they prove it from the light of nature. In those cases in which men admitted the moral perfection of God, the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles for the most part at least, rest their claim for the reception of the gospel, on the fact that its doctrines and its precepts are from God. In those other instances in which the claim could possess no force with men who did not admit the moral perfection of the Deity, or when they would increase its power, they appealed to the works of God. One of the most decisive of these arguments, when properly understood, is used by our Lord in the short but incontrovertible assertion, "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." *MATT. c. v. v. 45.* To appreciate the force of this argument however, we must revert to the concession of those to whom it was addressed, and the corresponding and proper assumption of our Lord; viz., the great fact of God's perfect moral government over men as the best means of the best end, and as such the only system worthy of a perfect God. With this great fact admitted by the mind, we at once see and feel the force of our Lord's appeal to the ceaseless and rich bounties of God's providential goodness, as conferred on creatures so guilty and so ill-deserving. Another is made by the apostle when enforcing on the Gentiles at Lystra, and also at Athens, their obligation to become the worshippers of the true God: "Who in time past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; nevertheless, he left not himself without witness—in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." *ACTS, xiv. 16, 17; and xvii. 23, 28.*

Secondly. The apostle in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, very fully affirms that the moral perfection of God is manifest under the light of nature. Here he not only asserts the abundant manifestation of God in his works, even his whole deity, but on this basis declares that under these

manifestations merely, they are without excuse, because they glorified him not as God. What more could men do even under the light of revelation? And to put the particular question now at issue beyond all further debate, the apostle expressly asserts their inexcusableness, because they were unthankful. I only ask how could they be under obligations to be grateful to a being, of whose goodness they had no proofs and which therefore they were bound to disbelieve?

## LECTURE VIII.

Third leading proposition continued, viz: God governs with rightful authority.—The benevolence of God may be proved, 1. From his natural attributes.—Nature of the argument.—2. From his works.—Preliminary definitions and explanations.—God is proved to be perfectly benevolent, by showing, (a) that the present system *may be* the best possible; (b) that it *is* the best possible.—Prop. (a) considered.—Objection from existence of evil.—Evil is natural and moral.—Natural evil considered in the sufferings of infants, of animals, and of men as moral beings.

To complete the argument for the perfection of God's moral government over men, it remains to prove his benevolence.

On this interesting subject we have two sources of argument—*the natural attributes of God, and his works of creation and providence.*

### I. The argument from his natural perfections.

This argument has not, I think, been often, if ever, presented in its full force. It being obvious that the evidence from this source, whatever it may be, must after all depend in one respect on what appears in his works—so depend on this, that if they, including what he does and fails to do, furnish decisive proof against his benevolence, little reliance can be placed on any argument derived from his natural attributes. Hence in almost all inquiries on the subject, the attention has been chiefly and properly directed to the works of God; and in view of the difficulties which these are supposed to offer, the argument from the former source has rarely been presented as having the strength which it actually possesses. In saying this however, I do not mean to imply that it has any force, until the difficulties which result from the existence of evil are fully removed. If this can be done, or if all decisive proof against his benevolence can be removed, then, in my view, this argument will be in a high degree conclusive.

I will here briefly attempt to unfold the nature of it, assuming that there is no counteracting evidence from any other source.

To estimate this kind of evidence of moral character—that which arises from the nature and circumstances of moral be-

ings—it should be remembered, that while it is quite supposable that it should be wholly counteracted by opposing evidence from conduct or works, it is, when thus uncounteracted, in a high degree convincing and satisfactory. As contemplated, for example, our first parents in paradise, or the angels in heaven, and reasoned *a priori* from their constitution and circumstances, with no opposing evidence, we should conclude strongly in favor of their moral perfection. If however, we had known other beings of the same constitution and in similar circumstances, who had sinned, our confidence in this conclusion would be greatly diminished; and if such cases were common, it would be lessened still more, until it is easy to see that we should reasonably doubt, or form an unfavorable opinion.

In respect to the Infinite Being, this *a priori* argument can be weakened only by one or both of these considerations—that beings far inferior to him, though formed in his image, have become selfish; and that no account can be given of existing evils under his government, which shall be consistent with his benevolence. The former consideration loses nearly, if not all its influence, from the fact that the beings are *creatures*, finite, and greatly limited in their powers, to say nothing of the manner in which they commence their moral existence. The argument then, from the infinite natural perfections of God, for his benevolence, if weakened at all, must be weakened only by the existence of evil. This, we hope to show hereafter, has no such influence. If so, then the argument from his natural perfections is justly regarded as conclusive.

## II. The argument from his works.

There is perhaps no single question in natural theology, to the investigation of which more theological talent has been applied, than to this—*whether the benevolence of God can be proved from the light of nature, or from his works?* The difficulties which have been supposed to pertain to it, and which have been regarded as peculiarly formidable, result from the existence and prevalence of evil in the world. Accordingly, the problem, *whence cometh evil under the government of a perfect God*, has employed from the earliest ages the ingenuity of speculative minds, and given rise to various theories for its solution. The most celebrated of these are *the theory of pre-existence, the theory of the Manicheans, and the theory of optimism*. The last of these, if we understand by it the general

doctrine, that the present system of means and influences, compared with any other, is the best possible to the Creator, has not only obtained the greatest prevalence, but seems to me to be the only one which is entitled to consideration. Different philosophers however, who have agreed in this general doctrine, have adopted two different specific theories, or have maintained two kinds of optimism. One class have maintained that all evil, both natural and moral, is the necessary means of the greatest good; while the other has denied this in respect to moral evil, and maintained, that in respect to divine prevention, it is incidental to the best system of means. These specific theories then agree in this: that the system which God has adopted, including both the beings created and the influences under which they act, is to him the best possible system. They agree also in respect to natural evil, that it is the necessary means of the greatest good, but differ in respect to moral evil, as I have already stated. They both proceed however on the assumption, as every theory to be in the lowest degree plausible as a vindication of the divine benevolence must, that there is an impossibility somewhere in the nature of things, that God should adopt a system wholly excluding moral evil. They differ however in respect to the question, where in the nature of things this impossibility lies; the one supposing it to be in the nature of moral evil, as being the necessary means of the greatest good, and that therefore God could not produce the highest good or happiness without sin or moral evil as the means of it; the other supposes that the impossibility may or does lie, not in the nature of moral evil, but in the nature of a moral system, as the necessary means of the greatest good, and that therefore God could not produce the highest happiness without adopting a moral system, to which moral evil, in respect to his prevention, is incidental.

If time allowed, it might be useful to show how the controversies on this subject have been occasioned and prolonged by the ambiguities of language, and unauthorized assumptions in reasoning. This however I shall attempt no farther than I think it necessary to give precision to some of the phraseology which I adopt in the present discussion.

By *benevolence* then, when applied to God, I mean a disposition or governing purpose to produce the greatest good, or the highest happiness in his power. Of course, to evince his

benevolence, he must show that he actually does that which is fitted on the whole to produce the greatest good in his power. It is however maintained by some able writers on the subject of the divine goodness, to be a sufficient proof of it, that there is more happiness than misery in the world, and that the present system, with its results, is better than none. It is undoubtedly true, that unless these things are so—at least, unless it can be shown that the present system with its results is better than none, it can furnish no proof of the benevolence of the Creator. But if these facts be established, it will not follow necessarily that God is benevolent; for that there is more happiness than misery in the world, is no proof that the Creator might not have produced a still greater amount of happiness than he does or will produce; nor from the fact, that the present system with its results is better than none, does it follow, that the Creator might not have adopted a system still better. And surely no argument can be necessary to show that a perfectly benevolent Creator will adopt the best system in his power.

In this assertion however, it is not implied that God has not given existence to some other world or worlds, in which there is more happiness than in this. My meaning is, that if God is benevolent, he could not have made a better world than this in its stead. For it by no means follows, that because he has made another world in which there is more happiness, that benevolence did not require the creation of this. Not to have created just such a world, or to have created any other in its stead, might have ruined all other worlds. Nor is this all. The existence of this world may be better than its non-existence, as resulting in a greater amount of happiness to the universe than would exist without it. Not to have created this world just as it is compared with creating it, or creating any other in its stead compared with creating this, might have diminished the amount of happiness on the whole, compared with that which depends on the creation of this world.

There is perhaps no view of this subject, which has so much plausibility, and which is more apt to embarrass the investigation of it, than that now adverted to. God it is said, or thought, has made one heaven of perfect happiness, why not make another, instead of such a sinful, suffering world as this? I answer: you overlook at least two things, either or both of which may be true in fact; the one is, the mutual dependence of

worlds, like that of the members of a human body ; the other is, that not to have created this world might have left a deficiency in the sum of happiness in the universe, which could not have been supplied by creating any other in its stead. Be these things however, as they may, the position is incontrovertible, *that a benevolent God will produce the greatest good in his power* ; and that therefore whatever he does in any given instance, must be not only better than to do nothing, but the best thing which he can do in that instance.

It is well here to recur to an important distinction made in another connection, between the greatest possible good, and the greatest good possible to God. It has been often assumed, that the greatest good possible or the greatest conceivable good, is possible to God ; and that therefore the greatest conceivable good, and the greatest good possible to God are identical. This is obviously an unauthorized assumption. For what is plainer, than that God may have created a system, which will result in the greatest good possible to him ; *i. e.*, the greatest good which he can secure ; but which would result in still greater good, were creatures to employ their powers in a perfect manner. Whether it is to be assumed, that God can so control the agency or actions of his creatures, as to secure the greatest possible good, which would result from his agency and theirs combined and perfectly employed, will be a topic of future inquiry. The only remark demanded for my present purpose is, that if it may be true, that the greatest possible good is not possible to God, then it cannot be necessary to the proof of his benevolence to show, that he has secured, or will secure, the greatest possible good ; for it is obvious, that a being decisively evinces his benevolence who shows that he does all the good possible to him, though less good be produced than would have been, had others afforded their active co-operation.

The phrase, *greatest possible good*, is often used by different writers, and even by the same writer in different senses, and has thus occasioned controversy and false conclusions. Hence has resulted the doctrine, *that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good*. Assuming that a benevolent God must produce the greatest possible good, meaning the greatest possible on the supposition that creatures produce as much good by their agency as they can, many have inferred, and justly from such premises, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest possi-

ble good. For if the greatest possible good, that is, the greatest good possible from the combined agency of God and of creatures, is produced, then it is done by that agency as actually employed, and is of course produced to a vast extent by sin. Of course, there could not have been as much good effected by any action of creatures in its stead, as by sinful action. Sinful action therefore, would be the necessary means of the greatest possible good. Not here to dwell on the palpable absurdity, that the worst kind of action should be the best kind of action; nor even to specify other absurdities equally palpable, involved in this supposition, I wish only to remark, that it cannot be necessary to maintain, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, for the purpose of proving the benevolence of God. If the present system is better than none, it will be sufficient for the purpose of proving the benevolence of the Creator to show, that he will secure as much good as he can, or as is possible to him, although more good would have been the result, had men done their duty. It is surely a strange principle, that a being, to evince his benevolence, must produce more good than he can, even all the good which might be produced by the active co-operation of all other beings; or, that it is not enough for this purpose, that he produce the greatest good in his power.

The question then is this:— *What is sufficient proof of this fact?* I answer, these two things; that it appears that what he does is better than to have done nothing; and that there is no proof that he could have done better. If these two things can be shown, they afford sufficient and decisive evidence that he does all the good in his power, and is therefore benevolent. This proof may be increased.

When what he does is better than to have done nothing, and when there is no proof, that he could have done better, then, if what he does can be clearly shown to be fitted in its true nature and tendency to produce the highest conceivable or the highest possible good, this greatly augments the proof of his benevolence; because it most decisively proves that he has done all the good he can, whether the greatest conceivable good be actually produced or not.

Take for illustration, a system of parental education. Suppose it plainly better than none, and that there is not the slightest reason to believe that the parent could have done any thing

better than he has done, who could doubt his benevolent intention? In addition to these things, suppose the system adopted by the parent is seen and known beyond a doubt, to be fitted to accomplish the result in the highest conceivable degree, then who can doubt whether he has done all he could to accomplish the best result, whether it be actually secured or not?

On these simple and obvious principles, I now propose to prove that—

GOD IS PERFECTLY BENEVOLENT.

I propose to show—

1. That the present system *may be* not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator.

2. That it is not only better than none, but is the best possible to the Creator.

The design of the former position is to meet in the outset of our argument the full force of the objection to God's benevolence, which is derived from the existence of evil. For if *the present system, notwithstanding the evil which exists, MAY BE not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator*, then the existence of evil furnishes no evidence at all that God is not perfectly benevolent.

The common assumption by those who regard the present subject as embarrassed with difficulty is, that evil so far as it exists, is so much evidence against the benevolence of the Creator. It is however an assumption which in this unqualified form is flagrantly gratuitous. It is not true that the communication of good or the infliction of evil simply considered determines the design of its author. Good may be imparted by malevolence, and evil may be inflicted by benevolence or kindness. This remark in respect to evil is of vital importance in the present discussion, and one with which the mind should be familiar. There are two principles in respect to the existence of the evil in this world, which furnish a triumphant vindication of the divine benevolence; viz.:

First. *Evil which is or which may be the necessary means of the greatest good possible to God, may be inflicted by benevolence, and is therefore no proof against his benevolence.*

Secondly. *Evil which is or which may be necessarily incidental (in respect to God's prevention), to that which is the necessary means of the greatest good possible to God, is no evidence that God is not benevolent.*

These two principles may be illustrated by an example. A surgeon amputates the arm of a patient to save his life. There are two evils in the case. One is the loss of the arm, and this is the necessary means of the greatest good. The other is the pain or suffering which is inseparable from the operation, and this is necessarily incidental, so far as the physician's power to prevent it is concerned, to that which is the necessary means of the greatest good in the case. Now who does not see how very irrational and perverse one must be, in this view of the evils supposed, or even if he only knew that they might be such evils, to deny the kindness of the physician in this attempt to save the life of his patient.

Under these two classes, I claim that all the evil in this world may be comprised, and that therefore it does not furnish the slightest evidence against the benevolence of God. This I shall now attempt to show:

The evil in the world is natural evil and moral evil. I propose to consider—

1. Natural evil.

All natural evil may be comprised in the sufferings of infants, the sufferings of animals, and the sufferings of men as moral beings.

1. The sufferings of infants. If infants are to be considered as moral and accountable agents—a doctrine which cannot be learned from the light of nature, their case furnishes no peculiar difficulty, since on this hypothesis it cannot be shown that they suffer more than they deserve. If however they are not moral agents at this period of existence, they are soon to assume this relation with all its responsibilities, and in circumstances of powerful temptation from natural good. How far it may be useful to such beings, to know by experience what natural evil is, before accountability commences, how far such knowledge may be necessary to weaken the power of temptation by augmenting the dread of the consequences of sin, how far it may serve to restrain from desperate wickedness, and even to prevent subsequent reformation from becoming morally impossible, it does not become us to decide. Some degree of suffering inflicted by the parental hand, even previous to ill desert, is the indispensable means of teaching the child its duty, and thus securing submission to parental authority.

Be this as it may, human ignorance is not competent to as-

sert that the sufferings of infancy are not, much less that they cannot be, either incidental to the necessary means of the greatest good, or be themselves the necessary means of the greatest good possible to God.

2. The sufferings of animals. These also may be unavoidably incidental to the necessary means of the greatest good possible to God, or the necessary means of that good.

It is undeniable that a great proportion of the sufferings of the animal creation, is occasioned by man; and though we are prone to inquire why they were made with such capacities of suffering, yet it is too much for human ignorance to determine, that they could answer all the purposes of their existence without these capacities. It *may* be true that the greatest good required that animals should be what they are, and men what they are, and that it were impossible to prevent those sufferings of the former which result from the cruelty of the latter. With respect to those sufferings which result from the fact, that different tribes of animals prey on each other, assuming that the greatest good required that they should be what they are in other respects, these sufferings may also be unavoidably incidental to their nature and condition; or this method of destruction, while some method may be required to prevent the evils of superfecundity, or to furnish that additional enjoyment that results from the succession of one race after another, *may be* the means of greater good in that increased happiness which is derived from this species of food, than could be produced without it. Be these things however, as they may, it is plainly too much for human ignorance to assert that the sufferings of animals may not be either the unavoidable result of the necessary means, or be themselves the necessary means of the greatest good which is possible to the Creator. Nor does it become us to decide, even on the supposition that no conceivable mode can be devised to explain the suffering of animals, which shall be consistent with the Creator's goodness *to them*, that no purposes can be answered by it in respect to his moral kingdom, which are worthy of his benevolence. The very mysteriousness of this providential procedure, may well heighten the awe of man toward the supreme Disposer of all. For if he inflicts such an amount of suffering on this part of his unoffending creation, what has man to expect for his provocations and crimes? What a lesson does the fact of ani-

mal suffering read to us respecting the sovereignty of the Creator? Who can say that this is not in many cases the *indispensable* means of convincing man that God can and will inflict suffering on him, and thus of keeping the moral universe in awe of its rightful sovereign? Without however, insisting that any of these specific suppositions accord with what is real, it is sufficient enough for my purpose, that the objector cannot show that they do not. It is enough that they *may*, in these and still other ways, which our minds have not conceived of, be consistent with the benevolence of the Creator. It is a case in which he might, for aught, we can show to the contrary, furnish ample explanation of his goodness, and it must be shown that he cannot, or the objection from animal suffering must be abandoned.

3. The sufferings endured by men, as moral beings. These, with the sufferings of infants and animals, include the whole of natural evil. The consistency of natural evil, so far as it is endured by beings who are accountable to their Creator for their moral conduct, with his benevolence, it would seem could never be called in question, if it be remembered how much less these sufferings are than they deserve. For the most abundant goodness admits at least, that each should suffer all that he deserves. If it should here be said, that the greatest good did not require a system of moral government, and that therefore to establish it, and to inflict suffering on the transgressors of its law is not consistent with benevolence, I reply that this is a new objection, taken not from the infliction of suffering, nor from the degree of it, but from the nature of the system. In other words, the divine goodness is impeached on the ground, that God has adopted a system of moral government. This topic will presently be examined. The objection therefore now under consideration, and which is taken from the sufferings of men who are accountable for their conduct, is abandoned. And well it may be, so far as there can be any question respecting the divine goodness toward men in their individual capacity. For with what face can men who suffer immeasurably less than they deserve, complain that God is not good to them?

On the supposition, and we are authorized, after what has been said to make it, that the greatest good required this system of moral government, the sufferings of men as its accountable subjects, instead of proving that God is not good because

they are so great, are proof, if of any thing, that he is not good because they are not greater. For if there be any proof from this fact, it must be that he disregards the public good, by not inflicting the full penalty of the law on transgressors. The consistency of this fact with his goodness, *i. e.*, with his regard to the public good, has been already evinced. It is worthy of remark, that many, not to say all, writers on the present subject, have overlooked the most plausible ground of objection, *viz.*, the deficiency of human suffering compared with human demerit, and rested their objection on the high degrees of it which exist; an objection which it would seem could be made by none but the culprit himself, and this only because he is perversely blind to the measure of his own guilt.

Besides this answer, furnished according to the first principle laid down, the second principle supplies another equally decisive. For who can doubt the necessity and utility of this influence of human sufferings? We have already shown that they are not legal sanctions, but simply paternal chastisements—corrective dispensations, whose design to recover men to virtue and to happiness cannot be unseen or unacknowledged by the most perverse. Viewed in this light, they are, as we shall show hereafter, to be ranked among the most decisive proofs of our heavenly Father's kindness toward the froward and guilty children of men. It may be said, that there are general laws established by the Creator, which would still continue and result in great natural evil to men, were they exempt from sin; that teeth would still decay and ache, that manifold calamities, by accidents, by diseases, &c., would still be the portion of man in this world; that this shows that the sufferings which are brought on men are not the consequences of sin, but result from those laws and tendencies of things which the Creator has established, irrespectively of man's moral character.

This objection I have already had occasion to notice, though under a different bearing. It deserves however, particular notice in this application of the facts on which it rests.

In answering this objection, it is important to ascertain with as much precision as may be, how much and what kinds of evil would still befall men, were they to become perfectly and universally holy. And here it is undeniable, that if all the sufferings that result directly and indirectly from human selfishness, under all its modifications of ambition, pride, envy, ava-

rice, lust and excess; and from all its acts in war, contest, fraud, falsehood and violence, were to cease from the earth; and if these were to be succeeded by universal benevolence, under all its modifications of kindness, forgiveness and compassion, with all the bright and inseparable train of beneficent deeds; and if with these things were to be associated that piety, which by its confidence, its hopes, and its joys, can sustain and cheer and gladden the soul, even under the severest trials; in a word, if perfect and universal holiness were to reign on the earth, human miseries would shrink away almost from human thought. So trivial would be our remaining sufferings, compared with the abundance of our bliss, that we could scarcely think of them, except as at most, inexplicable phenomena, for which an omniscient Creator could easily account, and which could therefore never awaken a doubt in respect to his overflowing goodness.

Nor ought it here to be forgotten what effects universal holiness would produce on the animal constitution of man, in removing its present tendencies to disease and pain—on the mental constitution, in its greater vigor and more successful activity, in its discoveries of remedies for the remaining ills of life, and of the means of improving in all respects our earthly condition. It is easy to see that these things might, not to say would, be beyond all our present conceptions. That the world, under these causes, would approximate to its paradisiacal state of happiness, can hardly be deemed a chimerical anticipation by any one who compares the improvements and blessings of civilized life, especially under the influence of Christianity, with a state of barbarism.

It might still be insisted, that no such diminution of human sufferings would result from these causes, as to preclude the force of the present objection, that still many of the laws of nature would continue to operate, and to produce pain, disease, and death itself. To this I would further reply, that it is not incredible that the world, and the laws of its phenomena, are formed and established by the Creator as the fit and best residence of those whose universal and perpetual sinfulness he foresaw; and that what now goes on, without change or variation, in these laws and their results, because there is no change in the human character to demand it or to render it useful, would undergo all those alterations from the hand of the Cre-

ator, which should render the world a fit residence of holy beings, should such a transformation of human character take place. Even such changes, so far as they would be requisite, would be slight, if what has been said of the benign efficacy of universal holiness be true, and might be easily effected, if not by natural causes, at least by the miraculous power of the Almighty.

Or, if this be not a satisfactory supposition, it is still remote from an incredible hypothesis, that the Being, who, as we have already shown, reveals himself so illustriously as the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, should translate to a world of perfect happiness those whose character should fit them for that exalted state of being.

But not to dismiss the objection even here. Let the facts on which it rests be conceded in their utmost extent; let it be granted, that many evils would still befall us in this world as the result of its established laws, though men universally were to become holy; that teeth would decay and ache, bones be subject to fracture and pain, and the body to disease and death; still it is quite possible, and may therefore be supposed, that this remainder of evil should be either the necessary means of a benevolent end, or inseparable from the necessary means of such an end.

It is not enough to say of this class of evils, as Dr. Paley has said, "that they are never perceived to be the *object* of contrivance." There is doubtless truth in his remark, and it is happily illustrated when he says, "teeth are contrived to eat, not to ache." And again—"no anatomist ever discovered a system of organization calculated to produce pain and disease; or, in explaining the parts of the human body, ever said, this is to irritate, this to inflame, &c." Though there is truth in the remark that the teeth are not contrived to ache, yet the fact falls short of the point of the objection which it is designed to meet; for the objector will ask, who made the teeth?—did not an omniscient and omnipotent God?—and why, knowing that if made they would decay and ache, did he not, as he might have done, make them so that no such evil should follow? I answer, that so far as the objection maintains that these evils could and would have been prevented by a benevolent Creator, it asserts what cannot be proved. For, allowing that the evils now adverted to would still befall men, though

perfectly holy, it is not impossible that they are either the necessary means of good, or inseparable from such means. It is not incredible that even perfectly holy beings, to answer in the best manner the purposes of an immortal existence, may need to pass through a course of moral discipline, of which the experimental knowledge of natural evil shall be an indispensable part. To suffer from carelessness or indiscretion, is eminently fitted to produce watchfulness and prudence, and may in this case be even necessary to prevent the successful assaults of temptation in the present or a future world. And even suffering, which shall be unavoidable by any means, may be indispensable to give a strength and permanence to the principle of submission to the divine will, which God could secure by no other means. But it cannot be necessary to imagine the specific forms and ways in which the evils of life now referred to may be the necessary means of a benevolent end, or inseparable from such means. According to the principles we have laid down, to show that such *may be* the fact, is enough to remove all the weight of this objection.

I have thus attempted to show, that the *natural* evil which there is in the world furnishes no evidence that God is not benevolent. The argument rests on the general and undeniable principle, that the mere existence of evil, resulting either directly or indirectly from the agency of any being, is not evidence that he is not actuated by a benevolent purpose. We have seen that evil *may be* inflicted from a benevolent design, and this in different ways, or on different principles. We have seen also, that all the natural evil which there is in the world, for aught we know or can prove to the contrary, *may be* inflicted according to some one or more of these principles, from a benevolent design on the part of the Creator. Why then should this evil be alleged as proof that he is not benevolent? Is not chastisement dictated by love, and are its sufferings properly alleged as proof of unkindness? and though we cannot say that all the natural evil in the world either is or may be placed in this category, yet we say that it *may be* as truly the dictate of kindness as the corrections of a father's hand. In this view of the subject, we may conclude that the existence of natural evil is absolutely NO EVIDENCE that the present system, with its results, is not the best system possible to God. It *may* therefore be the best system possible to God, notwithstanding the existence of natural evil.

## LECTURE IX.

Third leading proposition continued, viz: God governs with rightful authority.—God is benevolent, because the present system may be the best possible.—Objection from the existence of moral evil.—There may be an impossibility, in the nature of things, that it should be prevented. Assuming that a moral system may be the best, 1. It may be impossible to prevent all sin under a moral system.—2. If this is not true, it may be impossible under the best moral system.

IN the last lecture, I commenced the argument in support of the benevolence of God by proposing to show,

*That the present system may be not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator.*

In that lecture I considered the objection to the divine benevolence, derived from the existence of natural evil. I now propose to consider that which is derived from the existence and prevalence of moral evil.

This is justly esteemed the principal objection. It is demanded, if natural evil is a necessary and useful consequence of moral evil, why did not God prevent moral evil? Why did he not adopt, as he might have done, a moral system, which should result in the perfect and endless holiness and happiness of his moral creation; at least one which should have prevented the present extensive prevalence of moral evil? Or, if this was impossible, then it may be demanded again, why adopt a moral system at all; or, if he could not adopt a moral system, nor any other which should be better than none, then why adopt any system of creation?

This I think, is the objection derived from the existence and prevalence of moral evil in its full force. And it is obvious that it derives all its plausibility from the single assumption, that God, either by adopting a different system from the present, or none at all, could have done better than he has done. It is equally obvious, that fully and fairly to meet this objection, it is sufficient to show that the present system, notwithstanding the existence and prevalence of moral evil, *may be* not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator. For if

it *may be* true, then there is no evidence or proof to the contrary, and none is authorized to assert it. Of course the objection is groundless, and must be abandoned.

That the present system *may be* better than none, I shall for the present take for granted, and this for two reasons; one is, that in view of the excess of happiness over misery in the world, the possibility that the present system is better than none can scarcely be supposed to need proof; the other is, that I shall hereafter have occasion to prove that it *is* better than none. Indeed, I have adverted to this part of the objection rather as what might be said, than as what has been or is likely to be strongly urged. It is important however to show in this part of the discussion, that the present system, notwithstanding the existence of moral evil, *may be* the best possible system to the Creator.

By the word *system*, or the phrase *moral system*, must be meant all that which results in moral action, or in any way determines it to be what it is, including the nature of the moral beings themselves, and all the influences under which they act as such beings. The system must thus be distinguished from its results in moral action, as a cause from its effect, and thus be viewed as not including either sin or holiness as any part of the system under which they exist.

Some who maintain that the present system not only may be, but is the best possible to the Creator, attempt to show, that the reason that God does not prevent moral evil under it, is not that there is any impossibility in the nature of this moral system, or of any moral system, that he should prevent it; but that the moral evil which exists, is the necessary means of the greatest good. When it is said, that there is no impossibility that God should prevent all sin under the present system, the meaning must be, either that he can prevent it by some changes which would not impair its essential nature, or by direct interpositions of his power on the mind, thus leaving the nature of the system wholly unchanged in every other respect.

In opposition to this theory, it is now maintained that there *may be* an impossibility, *in the nature of things*, that God should prevent all sin under any moral system whatever, and the present degree of moral evil under the best moral system; and that therefore moral evil in its present degree may exist, not because it is the necessary means of the greatest good, but

because, in respect to divine prevention, it is incidental to a moral system, which is not only better than no system, but the best possible to the Creator.

The former of these theories has, in my own view, been so fully abandoned, even by its professed advocates in recent controversy, that I shall not here attempt a full exposure of its intrinsic absurdities and obvious inconsistencies with acknowledged truths. I propose to notice it only as it may come in my way, in defending the theory which I adopt.

If it can be shown, that there may be an impossibility in the nature of things, that God should prevent all moral evil under a moral system, and the present degree of moral evil under the best moral system, then it will follow, that the moral evil under the present system *may* exist; because, in respect to divine prevention, it is incidental to one which is not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator, and is therefore no evidence against his perfect benevolence.

Before I proceed directly to sustain this theory, I deem it important to remark, that no prejudice against it ought to be entertained by the disciples, and especially by the advocates of Christianity. It has often been said, that the existence of moral evil under the government of a perfect God, is a profound, unsolvable mystery, and that it has hitherto baffled the research of the most powerful minds in every age. Hence we are often met with the reproving interrogatory, *why not let it alone?* I answer, first, because the enemies of truth will not let it alone; and for the defenders of truth to shun the inquiry, is to abandon it without a defense, and to concede, in the field of argument, a complete triumph to Universalism, to Deism, and to Atheism. When the universalist reasons thus: God is infinitely good, and therefore disposed to make all his creatures holy and happy forever; he is omnipotent, and can secure this result, and therefore most certainly will secure it; and when, on the basis of this conclusion, he forces the doctrine of endless punishment, by false interpretation from the sacred page—when the infidel, from the same premises, comes to the same conclusion respecting the holiness and happiness of God's moral creation, and either because he has more sense or candor than the former, admits that this doctrine of future punishment is plainly taught in the Scriptures, and, for this very reason, denies that a benevolent God is the author of the book; and when the

atheist, on the supposition of a benevolent and an omnipotent God, infers that there could be no evil, and because there is evil, denies the existence of such a being, it is in vain, and worse than in vain, to cry out "*mystery*," in refutation of the argument. Such men as Voltaire and Hume, and multitudes of far inferior discernment, know that this is not reasoning. Their reply is, we knew that you could not answer; and they despise you for holding opinions which you are confessedly unable to defend. But further; the inquiry concerning the origin of moral evil is not to be avoided, for the Bible has not shunned it. Indeed, it would seem incredible that it should. Who can believe that Christianity has been given to the world, exposed to an objection which is incapable of all refutation, and which undermines not only its divine origin, but theism itself? It has not. Its divine author has formally stated and fully solved the great problem, *whence cometh moral evil?* He has solved it for the instruction not merely of philosophers, but of the people, and on substantially the same principle on which it is now proposed to solve it by reason. This he has done with unsurpassed perspicuity and force, in "the parable of the tares of the field." In this parable we are taught the following truths:

1st. That the kingdom—the reign of heaven—the moral government of God under a gracious economy—is perfectly fitted to its great design of reforming and saving all men.

2d. That the fact that there are wicked men, or that there is moral evil, rather than its opposite, under this best system, is in direct contravention of this great design of its divine author.

3d. That the reason that moral evil exists, is that there is an impossibility, in the nature of the case, that God should prevent it, under the system, which exempts him from all responsibility in respect to its existence; and

4th. That the interpositions requisite to remove the evil, would do more hurt than good, by diminishing the amount of holiness under the system.\*

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\* In confirmation of this view of the parable, I ask, whether the householder did not prefer a crop of pure wheat to one mingled with tares, all things considered; whether he preferred the tares, as the necessary means of the greatest good, to wheat in their stead; whether the introduction of the tares when men slept, did not involve an impossibility on his part of preventing it, which exempted him from

Here then we have the same solution of the problem *whence cometh moral evil*, which is now proposed with only this difference, that what the Saviour teaches as a fact, a doctrine, is now for a particular purpose in argument, proposed merely as a theory or possible truth. Why should such a theory be encountered with prejudice on the part of the friends and advocates of Christianity?

I now proceed to show on the principles of reason, that—

*There may be an impossibility in the nature of things, that God should prevent all sin or moral evil under the best system.*

Assuming what will probably not be denied, that a moral system may be the best system, I propose to show:

1. That there may be an impossibility that God should prevent all sin under a moral system; and

2. That if it be possible, that he should prevent all sin under any moral system, there may be an impossibility that he should prevent all sin under the best moral system.

1. *There may be an impossibility in the nature of things, that God should prevent all sin under any moral system whatever.*

That such an impossibility may exist, is evident from the nature of a moral system, for it necessarily includes the existence of moral beings; and sin or moral evil cannot be prevented in moral beings, by any power or influence which destroys their moral agency. To suppose this, is to suppose sin

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all responsibility in respect to their existence, and remove the necessity of any further vindication; and whether, if he had foreseen the attempt to introduce them, he would not have prevented their introduction, if he could, without incurring a greater evil than their introduction? Are not these the undeniable facts and principles by which the Saviour, in this parable, vindicated the character of God, in view of existing moral evil in the world? Can philosophy show the vindication to be founded in false principles? If it should here be asked, who made the devil? I answer, God made the devil, but he made himself a devil. If it be said, that still, as a creature of God, God is responsible for his character,—I answer, the parable obviously proceeds on the opposite assumption, viz.: that according to the popular view of the subject, the devil is the great enemy of God, and of his designs, for whose character and conduct God is not responsible—no more so, than the householder is for the character and conduct of his enemy. Otherwise, the professed explanation of the parable is a gross sophism, designed to deceive those to whom it was addressed. Whether therefore we say, that the devil is the personification of the source of evil in the world, or a real person, and therefore a creature of God, still our Lord assumes the existence of this source of evil as that for which God is not responsible, and as that which results in an impossibility that God should prevent the evil which exists under the present system.

to be prevented in moral beings who are not moral beings. But moral agency implies free agency—the power of choice—the power to choose morally wrong as well as morally right, under every possible influence to prevent such choice or action. Moral agency and of course moral beings can no more exist without this power, than matter can exist without solidity and extension, or a triangle without sides and angles. Let it then be kept in mind that I now speak of preventing sin in moral beings, free moral agents, who *can* sin under every possible influence from God to prevent their sinning. But if such beings do what in this respect they can do under every possible influence from God to prevent their sinning, they certainly will sin when it is impossible that God should prevent their sinning. And why may it not be so? Who knows or who can prove, that such cases will not occur under any possible moral system? No man knows nor can prove it. Therefore let no man assert it. There may be an impossibility that God should prevent all sin or moral evil under any moral system. The assumption that God can prevent all moral evil in a moral system, is wholly groundless and unauthorized, and the objection to his benevolence, derived from the existence of moral evil, which rests entirely on this assumption, is also groundless, and ought to be abandoned.

I do not say that there *is* an impossibility that God should prevent all sin under a moral system; nor even that it may not be true that there is not such an impossibility; but I affirm simply, that there *may be*. This is sufficient for my present purpose, that of answering the objection to the divine benevolence, derived from the existence of moral evil. For on this supposition, moral evil under the present system, in respect to divine prevention, *may be* incidental to a system which may be not only better than none, but the best possible to the Creator; and is therefore no proof against his benevolence.

Here this grand objection to the benevolence of God might be left as fully refuted. But many things may be said to strengthen the objection and to weaken the force of the reply to it, which has now been made.

These things may be comprised in alleging that the supposed theory is inconsistent with the omnipotence of God, and in supposed proofs, that God can prevent all sin in a moral system.

In the first place, it is often alleged that to suppose that there may be any impossibility that God should prevent all sin in a moral system, is highly dishonorable to God, inasmuch as it virtually denies his power as an omnipotent Being. The plausibility of this gratuitous assumption is such to most minds, through want of reflection, that it has perplexed the argument for God's benevolence more than every other consideration. In reply to this, I claim in the first place that they who assert that any impossibility that God should prevent all moral evil under a moral system, is inconsistent with his omnipotence, should either prove the assertion or retract it. What right has any one in reasoning to assert what he neither knows nor can prove to be true? Who does not know that there is a kind of impossibility in many cases, which God has no power to remove or overcome. It is impossible that God should cause a thing to be and not to be at the same time, that he should make two and two to be five, or a part equal to the whole. There is an impossibility to God in each of these cases which involves a contradiction. Reminding the objector of what every tyro in reasoning knows, that this kind of impossibility limits the power of God in such a sense as fully to justify us in denying his power in such cases, let him address himself to an argument showing that the same kind of impossibility does not exist in the case now under consideration. When he shall do this, we shall begin to suspect that his present objection to our theory is something more than either designed or undesigned sophistry. I reply again to this assertion with a denial of its truth. The impossibility now supposed of God's preventing all sin under a moral system, if it be real, is not inconsistent with his omnipotence. It is not that kind of impossibility which is given by a direct conflict between the power of the creature and the power of God, because the power of the creature to sin is superior to God's power. Such a direct conflict between the power of moral beings to sin and God's power, is as inconceivable as that the forces which produce the motion of the planets should be interfered with by the power of motives or arguments. The direct prevention of sin, or which is the same thing, the direct production of holiness in moral agents by dint of Omnipotence, is an absurdity, inasmuch as it implies that God is the efficient, proximate natural cause of their moral acts, and that they act morally without acting as moral agents, *i. e.*, without

being the proximate, efficient causes of their own acts. What then is the impossibility of God's preventing all sin in moral beings, which it is now supposed may exist? I answer: It is an impossibility, the supposition of which involves a contradiction in the nature of the case. It is the impossibility of God's preventing moral beings from sinning by any thing which he can do, when beings who can sin in despite of God, do in this respect what they can do. To suppose that in such cases they should be prevented from sinning, is to suppose them to sin and to be prevented from sinning at the same time, which is a contradiction and an impossibility. And would such an impossibility if it exists, dishonorably limit the power of God? Would it imply the want of any degree of that power which constitutes omnipotence? Must we then, if we could duly honor God, assert that he has power to accomplish contradictions, or to accomplish that, which for aught that can be shown to the contrary, may involve a contradiction and an impossibility in the nature of things—assert that to be true of God which for aught that can be known or proved to the contrary, may be false? Is God honored by the confident asseverations of mere ignorance, and on such a basis is either his goodness or his omnipotence to be denied? Plainly if the supposed impossibility of God's preventing all moral evil under a moral system actually exists, it no more dishonorably limits his power than the impossibility that the act should be prevented and not prevented at the same time, or than two and two should be five, or a part equal to the whole.

It is also to be said, that the doctrine that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, denies the power of God in the same sense as that in which the theory now maintained can be said to deny it. According to this doctrine God cannot—he has not power to secure the greatest good, without sin as the means of this end. It limits the Holy One of Israel by the impossibility of securing good, which results from the nature of sin; for it assigns this impossibility as the very reason for the existence of sin. Thus on both schemes, an impossibility in the nature of things is involved. In the one case it is maintained that there *may be* an impossibility of God's preventing all moral evil under a moral system, resulting from the nature of moral agency as involving power to sin under every possible influence to prevent it; in the other, that there *is* an impossi-

bility that God should produce the greatest good without sin, resulting from the nature of sin as the necessary means of the greatest good.

If either theory is true, God may be properly said to be limited by an impossibility in the nature of things. And which is the most dishonorable to him, the supposition that he cannot produce the greatest good without sin as the means of it; or that he cannot prevent that, the prevention of which may involve a contradiction—*i. e.*, he cannot prevent beings from sinning who can sin in despite of his power to prevent them? The former is utterly absurd and inconceivable. For how can it be impossible that God should produce the greatest good by the best kind of moral action. Or how can it be true that he cannot produce the greatest good without that kind of moral action, which is fitted to destroy all good and to produce all evil? How can that which is confessedly wholly an evil, only an evil—an evil without qualification, be the necessary means of the greatest good? How can the worst kind of action conceivable, be the best kind of action? If not, then how can it be impossible that God should produce the greatest good without sin as the means of it? Plainly the supposition of such an impossibility is the most palpable of all impossibilities. There can be no such. If then, one of the supposed impossibilities must exist, shall we suppose it to be that which *may* or that which *cannot* exist.

Further; there is no conceivable theory by which the benevolence and omnipotence of God—in other words, by which the existence of a perfect God can be vindicated, without supposing an impossibility in some respect that he should prevent moral evil, which is consistent with his benevolence and his omnipotence, and which is the reason of his not preventing it. The most plausible argument ever devised in defence of Atheism is probably that of Epicurus. This argument, when applied to moral evil, is substantially the following: “God either *would* prevent all moral evil, and *could not*; or he *could* prevent it, and *would not*; or he neither *would* nor *could* prevent it; or he both *would* and *could* prevent it. If he *would* and *could not*, then he is not omnipotent; if he *would not* and *could*, then he is not good; if he neither *would* nor *could*, then he is neither good nor omnipotent; if he both *would* and *could*, then moral evil would not exist. But moral evil does exist. Therefore there is no

God who is both good and omnipotent." Now where lies the fallacy of this boasted argument? an argument which in some form has been often repeated in triumph even to the present day. There are two assumptions in this argument, one of which is fully authorized; the other is wholly unauthorized. The former is that moral evil is *not* the necessary means of the greatest good, but is wholly an evil; for if it be the necessary means of the greatest good, it would not be, as is claimed in this argument, inconsistent with the divine goodness. This assumption is fully authorized; for how can the worst kind of moral action conceivable, be the best kind of moral action? The other, is the assumption that if God cannot prevent all moral evil under any and every created system, then he is not omnipotent; for if there *may be* an impossibility that God should prevent all moral evil under a moral system, or under the best system, which impossibility is consistent with his omnipotence, then the fact that he cannot prevent it, is no proof that he is not omnipotent; while if there can be no such impossibility, then God as both good and omnipotent would prevent all moral evil. But he does not, and it follows therefore from the present assumption, that if God is good he is not omnipotent. Indeed the existing moral evil being wholly an evil, must be supposed to exist, either because if God is good, he is not omnipotent; or because if he is omnipotent, he is not good, or because he is neither omnipotent nor good; or because there is an impossibility of his preventing the evil, which impossibility is consistent with his goodness and his omnipotence. Thus we are driven by unanswerable reasoning either into blank Atheism, or into the admission of some impossibility of God's preventing all moral evil, which impossibility is consistent with his goodness and his omnipotence. Such an impossibility may result as we claim, from any moral system, or at least from the best system. The assumption then that there can be no such impossibility, or that if God cannot prevent all moral evil under any, even under the best system, then he is not omnipotent, is unauthorized; and constitutes the fallacy of the foregoing argument for Atheism,

It is here worthy of remark, that the advocates of the doctrine, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, while they advance in so doing that which is palpably absurd, also maintain the groundless assumption of the atheistic argu-

ment. To vindicate the goodness of God, they maintain the palpable absurdity, that what is wholly an evil is the necessary means of the greatest good; and to vindicate his omnipotence, that there is no impossibility of his preventing all moral evil under any moral system whatever. They thus give their sanction to a principle which by just reasoning sustains downright Atheism. For if sin is, and who does not know it is, wholly an evil, and if there is no sense in which God cannot prevent it under the present system consistently with his omnipotence, then in view of the existing sin it follows either that God is not good or not omnipotent, or that he is neither good nor omnipotent.

But it is claimed, that there is the most decisive proof that God can prevent all sin, under any moral system whatever.

1. It is said, that as an omnipotent Being, he must have power to direct and control the conduct of his creatures as he pleases, or according to his will. By the will of God must here be meant, either his will as a lawgiver, in which he prefers, all things considered, that right moral action *should* (not shall) take place in all cases, rather than wrong; or, his providential will—his decree—in which he purposes that the event willed *shall* take place. If the former will be meant, then it is not admitted that God has power to control the conduct of his creatures, in all cases, according to that will. It is undeniable, that he does not in all cases; while it is equally so, that as benevolent and omnipotent, he would thus control it, were there no impossibility of his so doing, consistent with his benevolence and omnipotence. Such an impossibility is of course not inconsistent with these attributes. If *by the will* of God, be meant his providential will—his decree—then I deny that he has such a will to prevent the sin which actually takes place. Foreseeing the certainty of the sin, he could not will nor purpose actually to prevent it; but, on the contrary, must, rather than prevent it by destroying moral agency, or for some other reason, have purposed its actual existence. God therefore, whatever may be his will as a lawgiver, has no will or purpose that any sin *shall not* take place, which does take place. He has power actually to direct and control, as he wills actually to direct and control, the conduct of his creatures, and of course, power to bring to pass whatsoever he wills *shall* come to pass.

2. It is often said, that it is incredible that God should not

be able to prevent all sin in moral beings by the influence of motives. I answer, that if there *may be* such an impossibility, then such an impossibility is not incredible. Indeed, why is it incredible that God should not be able, by motives, to prevent beings from sinning, who possess power to sin under all possible motives which he can employ to prevent them.

3. It may be said, that God can create moral beings of such a nature as shall certainly prevent their sinning. If by "such a nature," be meant what some mean, viz., a holy nature as a constitutional property of the beings, I deny that such a nature can be literally created by God. To suppose holiness to exist in a creature of God, prior to all voluntary exercise or act on the part of the creature, is to suppose holiness to exist before it exists, which is absurd. In short, whatever nature God may be supposed to create in moral beings, they must have power to act morally wrong, under every preventing influence from God. And who can prove that such beings will not act morally wrong, and that it may not be impossible that God should prevent it?

4. The appeal is often made to facts. It is said, that God does and can prevent some moral beings from sinning; and if he can prevent some, he can prevent all. This is a palpable *non sequitur*. All moral beings have the power to avoid sinning, as well as power to sin. That some, who have the power to avoid sinning, should be prevented from sinning, is indeed altogether credible. But why is it not also, that it should be impossible for God to prevent some from sinning, who have power to sin under every possible preventing influence. To deny such impossibility, is "talking quite at random, and in the dark." Besides, there are no known instances of the prevention of sin in moral beings, except under a system in which others have not been prevented. And how do the facts alleged, prove that God could have prevented all sin, either under the present moral system or under any other? Nor could the sin of any who have sinned, have been prevented by God without some changes and interpositions for the purpose. Those requisite to prevent one sin, and especially to prevent all the sin which has taken place, supposing the system in other respects to be the same, might, in despite of future preventing interpositions, have resulted in more sin than could have been prevented. To assert therefore that God might have prevented

all sin in a moral system, or in any moral system, is to make mere arbitrary assertions, no man knowing enough of possibilities in the case, to adduce the shadow of proof of the truth of what he asserts.

5. But the objector may appeal (and I readily consent that he should) to the facts of revelation. He may speak of angels, who have never sinned and never will, and of the redeemed in heaven, who never will. But revelation brings to our knowledge neither angels nor men confirmed in holiness, except those who are confirmed under a moral system in which sin takes place. And who can show that any changes requisite to prevent the sin which has taken place, supposing that such changes might have been made, would not have resulted ultimately in a vast increase of sin? It may be said, that our first parents were for a time holy, and that, had their circumstances been continued exactly the same, they would have continued holy; for the same antecedents would have been followed with the same consequent. I answer, that it is impossible, in the nature of things, that the antecedents should continue exactly the same. When they had lived one day or hour in obedience to the divine will, some things were necessarily true of them which were not when they had thus lived but half a day, or half an hour. One change in the antecedents might lead to another. In the progress of their being, how many thoughts and feelings—what diversified associations and excitement of constitutional propensities would arise, which never occurred during the short period of their continued obedience! And if none but the omniscient Being could foresee these things, then who but he can pronounce on the result?

6. If the objector should still insist, that a God of infinite wisdom and power might have devised and adopted a moral system which would have excluded all moral evil, then I ask, what moral system? Can he specify it? Can he delineate minutely its essential, constituent elements?—the exact nature and degree of influence it must possess, that it may be effectual to prevent all moral evil? Could any thing be more presumptuous and audacious than such an attempt? And if he does not know what moral system, or that any moral system would be effectual to the prevention of all moral evil under it, how does he know that God could devise such a system? I am not saying that he could not; but I affirm, that no one can prove

that he could. The fact that moral beings can sin under any and every preventing influence from God, forever precludes the possibility of proving *a priori*, that they will not, and that there may not be an impossibility that God should prevent all moral evil under a moral system. It may be, that, had the nature of man, or his circumstances, or both, been different in any respect from what they are, or had any other influence in kind or degree been resorted to than has been, the system in other respects being the same, then the consequence, in despite of any and all further preventing interpositions, would have been an immeasurably greater amount of moral evil than has resulted, or will result from the present system. Had the powers of man been greater than they are; had he commenced existence with the more perfect faculties of manhood; had his susceptibilities, propensities, circumstances, been in any manner different, the results in moral evil, for aught we know or can prove to the contrary, would have been vastly worse than those of the present system as it is. Under the imagined change for the better, still man might have sinned. To sin in circumstances more favorable to virtue, might imply greater strength in the sinful principle or purpose, formed in resistance of the greater obligations and motives to virtue—even a desperation which would render vain all efforts to reclaim; which would prevent, by rendering useless, an economy of grace, and thus result in universal and hopeless sin and woe.

7. Should the objector still insist, that some changes might have been adopted by an all-wise and omnipotent Creator, which would have prevented the present prevalence of moral evil, I ask, what changes? Does he say, greater force of intellect, and consequently more just and adequate views of the nature and relations of the great objects of moral choice would have secured the end? I reply, that men do not sin through any such deficiency in this faculty of the soul, as to show, that to augment its strength, would change the result in practice. Besides, any finite strength of intellect is consistent with power to sin, and cannot therefore be alleged as proof that the subject of it will, not sin.

8. Is it then said, that greater strength of intellect, and a diminished strength of the propensities to natural good, would secure the result; I reply, that however vigorous the intellectual perceptions, and however weak the propensities to

natural good, so long as the latter are real, and such as are essential to moral agency, they must be capable of an excitement which shall render possible the choice of their gratification, since otherwise moral agency could not exist. It is impossible therefore to prove *a priori*, that such a moral agent will not sin.

9. Is it then said by the objector, that if sin were to be followed with the immediate execution of its curse on the transgressor, this would certainly diminish the degree of moral evil in the world? I answer, that the consequences might be immeasurably worse. Indeed, when we reflect that mankind actually possess sufficient intellectual capacity to perceive the difference between right and wrong moral action, and the infinite preponderance of motive to the former compared with the pleasures of sin, and think of the universal sinfulness of our race, the presumption rests on no slight basis, that to make this world a place of immediate retribution, would be to change it, with all its bright prospects from a state of trial, into a world of desperation in sin and suffering. In such a system, one sin would cut off all hope of the divine favor; and who could decide that all would not sin once? Thus the amount of moral evil might far surpass what now exists, and this world, instead of being a place of probation, cheered with intimations of mercy and forgiveness, might become the theater of retributive vengeance to all.

10. Should the objector propose any other emendation of the system, it would be equally nugatory. No one is competent to devise or suggest a change, which he, or any other man, can pronounce to be an improvement, without the most palpable presumption. To show how utterly groundless are all objections to the present system, derived from the existence of moral evil, we need only remark, that the present state of man is, or at least may be, one of moral discipline, in reference to the formation of his moral character for immortality; that it is, or at least may be, peculiarly fitted to give stability to moral principle, and thus to secure ultimately immutable moral perfection in man; and that every thing which pertains to it, as a system from God, may be indispensably necessary to secure the greatest amount of holiness and happiness to the universe which God can secure. Who then shall say, or be respected for saying, that any change in the system which he

can devise or suggest, would improve it? Who would take the responsibility of effecting, if he could, the least alteration in the system which the supreme Creator has adopted?

11. After all, the objector may say, if man cannot devise a system of greater perfection than the present, this is no *proof* that the Creator, a being of infinite perfection, cannot. I reply, that this is a mere evasion of the point at issue. My object has not been to *prove* that the Creator could not have devised and adopted a better system than the present; though I may hereafter show that we have good reason to believe that he could not; but to show that it cannot be *proved* that God could have adopted a better system than the present—that it may be true, so far as existing evil is concerned, that he could not, and that the assertion that he could, is presumptuous in the extreme. Hence the objection to God's benevolence derived from the existence of moral evil and therefore from natural evil, and which is designed to show that the present system is not the best possible to the Creator, being founded wholly in the ignorance of the objector, is to be laid entirely aside as nugatory and vain. The conclusion is, *that it may be impossible that God should exclude all moral evil from a moral system; and of course from the best moral system; and that therefore, great as the amount of moral evil is under the present system, it may be the best possible to the Creator.*

Some theologians however, instead of receiving the theory as now presented, have proposed a modification of it, maintaining that while God can prevent all sin under some moral system, *it may be true* that he cannot prevent all sin under the best moral system. More particularly they maintain that the present system *may be the best*, inasmuch as it comprises those high degrees of temptation and other moral means, which while they become the sure occasion of the sin of some, are necessary to secure higher degrees of holiness on the part of others, and thus higher degrees of happiness on the whole, than God could secure under some other system, under which he could prevent all sin.

My objection to this modification of the theory already presented, is not that it asserts that *it may be true* that God cannot prevent sin under the best moral system. That this may be true, I assert and maintain. But my objection is twofold;

viz., the theory asserts that God can prevent all sin under some moral system; and that it affirms certain specific or particular characteristics of the present moral system as those which may constitute it the best system, when there is much reason for believing that they do not.

I proceed then to say:

*First.* That the affirmation that God can prevent all sin under some moral system, is gratuitous and unauthorized. I know no advocate of this part of the theory, who has attempted to prove the affirmation that God can prevent all sin under some moral system. I admit that *it may be true* that he can; but claim to have shown that it may be true that he cannot. If there is no proof either that God can or that he cannot prevent all sin under any moral system whatever, then the affirmation, that he can prevent all sin under some moral system, is wholly unauthorized. Besides when it is once admitted that God cannot prevent all sin under a moral system which is the best, how can it be shown that he can prevent all sin under a moral system which is *not* the best? May it not be true for aught that appears to the contrary, that God cannot prevent all sin under any other moral system, as well as that he cannot under the best moral system? Is not the assertion then that God can prevent all sin under some moral system, altogether unauthorized? Is there any evidence or proof that the assertion is true rather than false? *Secondly.* There is not only no proof that the higher degrees of temptation with other moral means, which are supposed to be essential to the best system, are necessary to secure or will secure the highest degrees of holiness, but much evidence to the contrary. How does it appear that a moral being cannot love God with all his heart, mind, soul and strength, *i. e.*, as much as he can love him, under a low as well as under a high degree of temptation, or as well under one system of means, as under another? How can it be shown that a moral being can or will love God more than he can—more than with all his strength, because temptation is great? Can it be shown that his strength will be increased as temptation is increased? And if this cannot be shown, how can it be rendered in the lowest degree probable that the greater the temptation to sin, the greater will be the degree of holiness? On the contrary, if there is any principle to be reasoned from in the case, it is that the greater the degree

of temptation to sin, other things being the same, the less will be the degree of holiness. It is on this very principle that orthodox divines as a class, account for the universal depravity of unrenewed men, and the low degree of holiness in those who are renewed. They trace these results to the high degree of temptation which arises from their propensity to sin. Is it a uniform fact that the increase of temptation results in the increase of holiness? Is temptation a means of grace? Or is it to be received as a general principle, that if good men would be perfect in holiness, they must shun temptation? There is plainly a strong probability then, against the supposition, that to increase the degree of temptation should increase the degree of holiness. But for the sake of the argument, let it be conceded that such would be the result of high degrees of temptation in respect to a part of the subjects of a moral system; how does it appear that what would thus be gained in holiness and happiness by them, would not be more than overbalanced by greater degrees of sin and misery to another? If it be said that it may *not* be so, the answer is, that it *may be* so, and there is no evidence that it would not be so, not to say, the probability is, that it would be so. *Thirdly.* There can be no proof that God can prevent all sin under a moral system, or that having adopted a moral system, he can prevent all sin without destroying moral agency. Suppose what is called the best system of means and measures to be adopted, God either can or he cannot prevent all sin under this system, and of course without destroying moral agency. If he can prevent all sin under this best moral system, and this by the mere exertion of his power, without at all changing the system of means, and of course without destroying moral agency, why does he not thus prevent all sin? Would an omnipotent being in such a case deprecate the requisite interposition of his power? Why then as a benevolent and an omnipotent being, does he not interpose his power, and thus prevent all sin and secure perfect holiness and happiness forever under this best system of means and measures? Is it said that sin itself is the necessary means of the greatest good? But this preposterous dogma the advocate of this theory rejects. Can any reason then be given why God, having adopted the best system does not prevent all sin, except that he cannot without destroying moral agency? Is it said that to prevent all sin by the supposed interposition of power,

would be preventing it "in such a way as would derange and impair the best possible system of means?" But the system of means according to the supposition, is unchanged. It remains the same in all that gives it excellence, or constitutes it the best system of means, whether sin be prevented in the manner supposed or not. Why then is not all sin prevented by the supposed interposition of divine power? Is it said that it may be true that to prevent all sin and to secure universal and perfect holiness and happiness forever by this method, would lessen the amount of holiness and happiness compared with what would otherwise exist? Be it so. But *it may also be true* that such would not be the effect; and the reason that God does not prevent all sin *may be* another; viz., that he cannot without destroying moral agency. Besides, the thing supposed, viz., that God should prevent all sin under the system, and by so doing lessen the comparative amount of holiness, is impossible. To suppose less holiness than perfect holiness or the highest possible, to be the effect of the supposed divine interposition, is to suppose less holiness than ought to be, which is sin; and surely God cannot be supposed to adopt a method of preventing *all sin* which will produce sin! Is it then said that God cannot prevent all sin and secure universal and perfect holiness forever under the best system, merely by the direct interposition of his power? Be it so. Then the question returns, how does it appear that he can prevent all sin forever under any moral system, that is, prevent it forever without destroying moral agency? By doing this he can prevent all sin. How does it appear that he can prevent it, if he introduces a moral system without destroying moral agency? It is admitted that *it may be true* that God cannot prevent all sin under the best moral system. Why may *it not be true* that the very reason that he cannot, is that he cannot prevent all sin, having adopted any moral system, without destroying moral agency? And if this may be the reason that he cannot prevent all sin under the best moral system, why may it not be a reason that he cannot under any other system which is not the best? Adopt what moral system he may, the possibility of sinning which is given by moral agency in despite of divine power to prevent it remains, and excludes all proof that sin will not take place under the system. No man therefore can either know or prove, that there is any way in which God

can prevent all sin if he adopts a moral system, unless he destroys moral agency.

I now proceed to show as I proposed :

2. *That if it be conceded that God can prevent all moral evil under some possible moral system, it may still be impossible that he should prevent all moral evil, even the present degree of moral evil under the best moral system.*

I do not say that conceding the former, the latter would be probable. Still *it may be true*, that were God to adopt the system under which he could prevent all moral evil, either on account of the small numbers of beings which the system would require, or on account of their limited capacity, or for some other reason, he would greatly lessen the happiness of his creation compared with adopting another system under which he cannot prevent all moral evil. The present moral system as consisting of a given number of moral beings, and possessing exactly the nature, the powers, susceptibilities, propensities which they do possess, and placed in exactly the circumstances in which they are placed—for aught that appears to the contrary, may be the only system by means of which God can produce the highest happiness which he can produce.

Any other system, which would prevent the existing degree of moral evil—if such a system be possible—might greatly impair the results in happiness, as these depend, not indeed on the existence of moral evil as the means of happiness, but on the nature of the moral system itself; that is, on the number and nature, the powers and capacities of the beings, and the various kinds of influence and sources of happiness which the best moral system includes. There may then be an impossibility, not indeed that God should produce the greatest good without the existing moral evil as the means of it, but that he should prevent the existing moral evil under the present system. Moral beings, under this best moral system, must have power to sin, in despite of all that God can do under this system to prevent them; and to suppose that they should do what they can under this system, viz., sin, and that God should prevent their sinning, is a contradiction and an impossibility. *It may be true* that such beings, in this respect, will do what they can do—that is, will sin—when of course it would be impossible that God, other things remaining the same, should prevent

their sinning without destroying their moral agency. Granting then the possibility, that God should prevent all sin under some moral system, still it may be impossible that he should do it, without either adopting some other system of means than the best, or, having adopted the best, without destroying it by destroying moral agency.

In opposition to this conclusion however, there are some who will still reply, that "with God, all things are possible;" that, as an omnipotent being, he can prevent all sin under one system of means and measures as well as under another, even as well without means as with; that he can prevent all sin in moral beings, by the direct and immediate interpositions of mere omnipotence—by mere dint of power—by acts of *literal* creation, producing holiness in all.

It is readily admitted, that in the true sense of the language, "All things are possible with God." But what are often and properly called *things* in one sense, cannot be properly called *things* in another. In the most general sense, any mere *object of thought* is properly called a *thing*. Of these objects there are two classes. The one class are *things* (thought-things) which are not real, and those which are not possible; while the other class are things which are either real or possible. Thus to make two and two equal to five, is impossible. Does it then imply any deficiency of *power* in God, that he cannot make two and two equal to five? No more does it imply any deficiency in power on his part, that he cannot prevent, in supposable cases, beings who can sin, in despite of his power, *i. e.*, moral beings from sinning, under the best moral system. In the nature of things, there may be an impossibility which involves a contradiction. If such impossibilities limit the power of God, or are inconsistent with his omnipotence, who can believe or assert his omnipotence? When it is said, that "with God all things are possible," who can suppose that the *all things* includes things which involve contradiction and impossibility in their very nature, and infer that God can make two and two to be five, or the diameter of a circle to be equal to its circumference, or can prevent beings in all cases from sinning, who can sin, under every preventing influence from him?

Is it then said, that God, as an omnipotent being, can prevent all sin under one moral system as well as under another—

as well without means as with? Then I ask, why can he not secure any other result without means as well as with?—why can he not secure the greatest good, without sin as *the means* of it; and if he can, how is sin the necessary means of this end? If it is limiting the power of God to suppose that he cannot accomplish his designs without means, then it is limiting his power to assert that he cannot secure the greatest good without sin as the *means*. It is wholly unsupported by facts; for in what instance has God ever prevented sin in a moral being, without means? It is absurd and self-contradictory. If sin be prevented in moral beings, it must be prevented by their acting, and acting morally right, in view of motives. Is it then said, that God can prevent all sin in moral beings by any degree of motives, and especially by that degree which is comprised in the best moral system? But who knows, or can prove this, who is authorized to assert it? No one. The assertion is wholly arbitrary, and he who makes it knows not whether he asserts truth or falsehood. That system of means and measures, which is necessary to the greatest good which God can secure, may be inconsistent with God's preventing all moral evil under the system. According to this view, sin is wholly an evil—evil in all its tendencies; and still God permits and purposes its existence, rather than not adopt the best moral system. As the husbandman does not sow good seed in his field for the sake of the tares, *i. e.*, because he prefers tares to wheat; but notwithstanding the tares, which he may foresee will come in among the wheat, and for the sake of the good, which will still far overbalance the evil; so God may have adopted the present moral system, not for the sake of the sin, or of any good of which it is the means, but notwithstanding the evil, and for the sake of the overbalancing good, of which the system is the necessary means. \*

After all, the great question, concerning the goodness and the power of God, which results from the existence of moral evil under his government, depends not so much on either of the particular theories which have now been propounded, in preference to the other, as on an assumption which is opposed to both, *viz.*, that God can prevent all moral evil under any moral system whatever, by the direct and immediate interpositions of mere power. It is this which is relied upon in common by atheists, deists, universalists, and a large class of orthodox di-

vines, in their reasonings on the subject. We have seen how this assumption, in connection with other premises, leads to Atheism, Infidelity, and Universalism; and also how utterly feeble and insufficient is the defence of the orthodox against these errors, while they admit its truth. So long as this assumption is made and conceded—so long as it is admitted that God, by the mere interpositions of his power, can prevent all moral evil under any moral system whatever, the problem, why does he not prevent it, will remain incapable of solution. Nor can it be thought strange, that one class of minds, in view of existing moral evil, should deny the existence of a being of boundless goodness and power; that another should deny, that the book which asserts the endless sin and misery of multitudes of our race is a revelation from a perfect God; that another, receiving the book as divine, should deny that it contains a doctrine so plainly inconsistent with the character of its author. That moral evil, with its manifold calamities and woes, exists, cannot be denied; and so long as it is admitted that a benevolent God can, by the mere interpositions of his power, prevent the evil under the best system, the conclusion, to a greater or less extent, will be, either that there is no such being, or that if there is, he will sooner or later terminate the evil, in the universal holiness and happiness of his moral creation. The monstrous absurdity, that sin is the necessary means of the greatest good, will not be received by all as the only alternative except that of Atheism; or if received as such by some, still the undeniable truth that a benevolent God will do all the good he can, will not be rejected by all for the sake of avoiding Infidelity and Universalism. The error obviously lies in the gratuitous and unauthorized assumption, that there can be no impossibility of God's preventing moral evil under a moral system, or at least under the best moral system, which impossibility shall be as truly consistent with his omnipotence, as is the impossibility of making two and two to be five, or a part equal to the whole. When this truth, that there may be such an impossibility, shall be seen and familiarized by the mind, as presented by just views of moral agency and of a moral system, then, and not till then, can the present system, notwithstanding the existence of moral evil, be seen to stand forth as an eternal monument of the wisdom, power and goodness of its Author; then, and not till then, will men learn to vindicate

the ways of God to man, not by the far-fetched and unnatural principles of a vain philosophy, but by the natural, obvious, common-sense principle, by which they vindicate and applaud the wisest and best of earthly rulers, when his laws are transgressed—the principle, that notwithstanding the evil he has done, he has done the best thing which he can do.

## LECTURE X.

Third leading proposition continued, viz.: God governs with rightful authority.—God is benevolent.—2. The present system not only *may be*, but *is* the best possible to the Creator.—(a) It is better than none.—Happiness greater than misery in this life.—Results in a future world.—(b) It is the best possible.—No proof that a better could be adopted.—The present, in its nature and tendencies, is the best conceivable, and therefore the best possible.—This argued under two heads; 1. From its general form as a moral system, in respect to the kind of beings and the kind of influence used.—2. From its particular forms as a moral system, as involving influences from the nature and tendencies of moral action, from moral government, from an equitable moral government, and the same with a gracious economy.—Remark.

In the two preceding lectures, I have attempted to show that there is no proof against the benevolence of God, by showing that the present system, with its results, *may be* not only better than none, but *may be* the best possible to the Creator.

I now proceed,

*To offer direct proofs of his benevolence.*

Before I adduce the proposed proof, I will give an illustration of the argument on which I rely. A system under which evil exists, may be shown by decisive evidence to be the best possible system. It is obvious however, that this must be shown in a somewhat different manner from what it would be were there no evil connected with the system. To illustrate then by an example: a physician may perform the best possible operation of which the case admits, in amputating the limb of a patient, notwithstanding the pain which is inseparable from it. If all that can be shown in the case is, that the evils connected with the operation may be either *inseparable from the necessary means of the greatest good*, or may be themselves the necessary means of the greatest good, then, although the operation would not prove the physician to be benevolent, it would oblige us to admit that he may be benevolent, notwithstanding these evils. The question, when judged of merely by the facts now supposed, ought to remain undecided; or rather, cannot be decided in the negative. To this point, our preceding discussion respecting the question of the divine benevolence, so far as it depends on the existence of evil, has conducted us.

Let it now be supposed, that to amputate the diseased limb is better than to do nothing, and that there is no evidence that the physician has not done the best thing in his power, and there is good reason to believe the benevolence of the physician in the act. This may be said to be the lowest ground on which we are authorized to believe that he is benevolent. It is however, sufficient for this belief.

We will now suppose a stronger case—that the amputation of the limb is *known* to be the necessary means of the greatest good, and that all the evils connected with it either *may be* inseparable from it, so far as the power of the physician to prevent them is concerned, or *may be* themselves the necessary means of the greatest good. In such a case we have better grounds for awarding to the physician a benevolent design in the operation.

We will now suppose a case still stronger. Suppose not only that the amputation of the limb is known to be the necessary means of the greatest good, and that all the evils connected with it, except those which are the necessary means of the greatest good, are inseparable from the operation beyond the power of the physician to prevent them; that they result solely from the voluntary intemperance of the patient himself, and this when the physician does every thing in his power to prevent them, and the only legitimate conclusion is, that he is as benevolent as had this class of evils not existed. If we still further suppose, in respect to the other class of evils, viz., those which are the necessary means of the greatest good, that they become thus necessary only by the perverseness of the patient himself in his intemperance, then the conclusion is, that the physician is as benevolent as had these evils not existed, while these evils become themselves proof of his benevolence.

On these suppositions, it is obvious that the benevolence of the physician is as fully proved by the supposed operation, as the using of the best means of the best end can prove him to be, or as had results in good, without the slightest degree of evil, followed in the case. If now we suppose once more, that he combines with this operation every other expression of real kindness, then more indisputable and decisive proofs of benevolence could not be furnished. By all these forms of proof, it is now claimed that the benevolence of God is evinced to the

human mind by that system of things, with its results, which he has adopted.

The argument as a whole, may be thus stated in a hypothetical form, with the conclusion :

If there is no proof, so far as results are concerned, that God could have adopted a better system than he has adopted—if this system, in view of its results, is better than none—if this system be the best possible to God, and so the necessary means of the greatest good possible to him to secure—if all the evil connected with the system is either inseparable from the best system, in respect to divine prevention, or is the necessary means of the greatest good possible to God; and if God, in addition to all this, actually shows kindness to his creatures, in every other conceivable form which is consistent with the greatest good possible to him—then it will follow, that

God is benevolent—even as benevolent as had the best possible, or best conceivable results, been actually secured.

Having attempted to show that the present system *may be* not only better than none, but the best possible, I now proceed to show as I proposed :

2. That it is not only better than none, but is the best possible to the Creator.

(1.) The present system is better than none. This I propose to show :

First. From the comparative amount of happiness and misery in the present world.

Secondly. From the results of the present system in a future world.

I appeal—

First; to the comparative amount of happiness and misery in the present world.

We claim then, that the amount of happiness so far transcends the amount of misery, as to put an end to all doubt on the question, whether the present system with its results is not far better than none. To contemplate the actual experience of men, and to institute such inquiries as the following, must decide this question. Where is the individual to be found who does not at every moment of life enjoy so much in present possession, or in hope of future good, as to render his existence desirable? How few—how very few are the instances of calamity and suffering with which manifold and rich blessings are not

combined—how few individuals within our own knowledge, who are not enjoying every useful and necessary gift of divine bounty, and prepared and qualified to enjoy any additional happiness that might be furnished! Who is not ready to welcome the knowledge or information that gratifies curiosity—to be entertained with the humor of the wit, or the ingenuity of the artist? What an amount of all that can be called human misery, is chiefly imaginary; and how may that which is real be diminished by contentment, by submission, or by resorting to available sources of happiness. Even when war, famine and pestilence pour in their floods of suffering and distress, how large a portion of the wide earth, untouched by their desolations, exhibits scenes of joy and gladness, while the sufferers themselves cling to life through the remembrance of joys that are past, or the hope of those that may come! In short, when we look over the world and see all its millions with exceptions which scarcely are to be thought of, retiring to rest every night, with the quiet and assured anticipation of the supply of the essential wants of to-morrow, and reflect that this is founded only on the uniform experience of the past, how can we fail to pronounce this a happy world—one at least in which existence is far better than non-existence? If we turn our thoughts to the innumerable sources of enjoyment in the animal, rational and moral departments of creation—if we contemplate the invisible existence that peoples every leaf, the sportive mazes of the insect tribes that abound in the atmosphere and the waters—the notes of joy which are heard from every grove, the delighted activity of the larger animals, the wonderful provision made for their supply of food, the obvious and nice adaptations in their nature and condition for their comfortable or joyous existence; if we consider man's capacity for enjoyment from the wide creation around him, through the organs of sense, and the amount of good which would in this way be furnished, were the means of it never perverted; if we think of the numerous channels of higher pleasures which are opened to man in his intellectual and social nature, and reflect how these are supplied by the everflowing streams of divine bounty in all the tender relations of life; and then reflect on the annihilation of all these earthly joys in the utter darkness and desolation of non-existence, how can we either wish not to have been or to cease to be?

If we contemplate men as moral beings, how are the vicious and guilty even exempted by divine compassion from the overwhelming agonies of remorse!—how are the virtuous solaced and gladdened as with the peace of heaven! Nor ought we to overlook the capacity of happiness involved in the very nature of moral beings; what a condition of perfection and of bliss it places within their power, and one not to be despaired of, but rather to be hoped for and expected by the well-founded belief of the enrapturing truth, that God is, “and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

If now we take the most gloomy view of human existence, so far as it can bear on the present inquiry, we can at most find but here and there an individual bosom so desolate of all good, so oppressed with present griefs and gloomy forebodings, as to consent to plunge into the dark gulf of non-existence, while myriads are exulting in life and its joys. How would these myriads, instead of counting their existence undesirable, prefer its endless duration as it is, rather than hazard a diminution of their happiness by any essential and yet uncertain change in their condition? Supposing the prospect of improvement to be fair and promising, very few with the uncertainty remaining whether the change would not be for the worse instead of for the better, would rationally in their own view incur its risk. This shows how we value life, being so well satisfied with its blessings, that to hazard the uncertainties of a change in our condition of existence, would be deemed the height of folly. It shows how readily, were the alternative a great diminution of happiness or non-existence, we should prefer the former, and how appalling would be the prospect of ceasing to be, compared with our present existence and the abundance of its joys. Every thing in human society, in the devices of man, the laws made to protect human life, the remedies used to heal diseases, the safeguards from accident and danger, the provision of food and raiment, in short, every preservative of life, shows that its loss is esteemed the greatest to which man in this world is liable. To preserve life is the great end to which human solicitude has ever been directed, and for which human ingenuity and skill have been exhausted. Nor can there be a doubt that it would still be so, were death known to be an eternal sleep—at least to such an extent, as to show how

highly man values the existence which his Creator gives him in the present world.

Should it here be said, that I have now taken but a partial view of the results of the present system—that, although it be true that our earthly existence merely, is greatly to be preferred to non-existence, yet there is a future state, and a majority of men actually leave this world with that character, which insures their future unmingled and endless misery—I answer as before, that if we suppose a majority of men to die in sin, the light of nature does not decide that the present life is the whole of man's probation; and that therefore it *may be* true, that the design of God to recover men to virtue and to happiness, so conspicuously manifested here, will secure the perfect happiness of far the greater part of mankind hereafter. Indeed, this cannot, from the light of nature, be shown to be in the lowest degree improbable. Here then I might form a conclusive argument for the divine benevolence, thus: as there is no evidence that God is not doing all the good in his power, or that he could adopt a better system than the present; and as the present system, in view of its results *in the present world*, is better than none, it follows that God is benevolent.

But not to rest the argument on this ground merely, I remark secondly, that the present system, in view of its results *in a future world*, is better than none. Here it may be asked, with some degree of incredulity, what can we know, or rationally believe, under the mere light of nature, respecting the allotments of men in a future state? I answer, we can know all that which legitimate evidence warrants us to believe; and the declarations of God on this subject are not the only kind of evidence of which the case admits. His doings may as truly indicate his designs, and tell us what will be their results, as his declarations.

Here then I appeal to what has already been shown respecting the present system. I shall however but briefly appeal to these facts, intending more particularly to consider them in a subsequent argument, to show that the present system is the best possible to the Creator. The same facts show that the present system is better than none, as they evince the designs of God toward men in a future state.

The facts to which I refer are briefly these: the creation of the most perfect beings in kind; the end of their creation, as

indicated by their nature, which is the best conceivable; the actual giving of the best law, or rule of action; the administration of a moral government involving this perfect law, and a strict adherence to the principles of perfect equity, and not only this, but connected with it, an economy of grace; every thing in the condition and circumstances of man fitted to restore him to virtue and happiness, and to secure him in this state of perfection; while no change is conceivable, which would add perfection to the system as the means of this high end. What then can we—ought we to believe, will be the results of such a system in a future world? Will this high design of a Being of infinite wisdom and power be wholly defeated? Will our present state, so bright with the smiles of his mercy, be followed by one only dark and dreadful, under the frowns of his anger? When God is so clearly aiming to restore man to holiness and happiness, is there nothing to hope for but universal sin and exact retribution? True it is, that from the light of nature alone, we cannot in all respects give a definite answer to the present inquiry. But we are constrained to give one that is general, and altogether decisive on the point before us. The nature of the present system, so clearly and extensively benignant in its design, proves that this design will not be wholly abortive, but in some good degree accomplished. This system, begun by infinite wisdom and power, and carried onward through all the generations of men, clearly indicates results in a future state corresponding with its own benignity and grace. To hesitate or doubt on this point, especially in view of the infinite natural perfection of the Being whose design it is, is to do violence to the laws of belief, as well as to disregard and distrust the only possible proofs of the divine placability.

In view then of what we must suppose will be the actual results of the present system in a future world, we must also believe that the present system, viewed in relation to these results, is better—far better than none, and the best possible to the Creator.

The way is now prepared to offer direct proofs of the benevolence of God from his works.

Argument I. The first argument is, that there is no proof, so far as results are concerned, that God could have adopted a better system than the present, and there is proof that the present

system is better than none. That there is no proof so far as results are concerned, that God could have adopted a better system than the present, I have already attempted to prove, by showing that it may be such a system notwithstanding the existence of natural and moral evil. If what has been said on this subject be true, then their existence is to be wholly laid aside as entitled to no consideration in the argument. We have shown that all existing evils may be either the necessary means of the greatest good possible to the Creator, or in respect to divine prevention may be incidental to the best system possible to the Creator. Of course if there be other facts, which, were there no existing evil, would be sufficient to prove his benevolence, then as the existing evil furnishes no proof that he is not benevolent, or that the present system is not the best possible to the Creator, this evil must, in a fair argument, be laid out of consideration. The present system *may be*, notwithstanding the existence of the evil, the best possible to the Creator.

Again; it has been shown that the present system is better than none. And if this is true, and there is no evidence that God could have adopted a better system than the present, then it follows that the present system is the best possible to the Creator, and that he is therefore benevolent.

It may be well to remark here, that the argument, according to the illustration of it before given, is cumulative. When we have established the two premises of the foregoing argument, we have furnished a valid proof of the divine benevolence, and therefore in each of our remaining positions we shall increase the proof.

I now offer a second general argument :

Argument II. The present system in its nature and tendencies is the best conceivable, and therefore the best possible to the Creator.

I have said that the proof of the divine benevolence is cumulative. What I claim for it in this respect is, that when as in our first argument, it is shown that in view of *the results* of the present system, it is the best possible to the Creator, then if in view of *the nature and tendencies* of the system, it be shown that it is the best conceivable, we have still further proof that it is the best possible to the Creator, and so much additional proof of his benevolence. The nature and tendencies of

the system, if they can be shown to be the best conceivable, now become in view of the perfection of the system as judged by its results, so much uncounteracted and independent proof of the highest possible perfection of the system; proof as decisive and complete as were the system actually followed by the highest conceivable good which it is fitted to produce. Nor is this all. But when, as we have shown, not only there is not the least counteracting evidence from any other source, but the present system, judged of by its results, is the best possible to the Creator; then each and every adaptation, fitness, tendency of the system to the production of the highest conceivable good, is so much additional proof that the Author of the system designed the highest conceivable good; and is therefore so much additional proof of his benevolence in adopting the system. In this mode of reasoning then, I now proceed to show that the present system is the best possible to the Creator, by proving that *in its nature and tendencies* it is the best conceivable system.

This I shall attempt to show:

1. From its general form as a moral system; and
2. From its more particular forms as such a system.

That the present system then is the best conceivable, and therefore the best possible to the Creator, I argue—

1. From its general form as a moral system. As a moral system in distinction from any system not moral, it is *in kind* the best conceivable. It is so, if we consider *the kind of beings* and *the kind of influence* which it involves.

And first in respect *to the kind of beings*. These are of course *moral beings*; and as such are formed in the image of God himself. No other work of the Creator could so employ his wisdom and his power—no other creatures could be so exalted in the scale of existence—no other product could so manifest the infinitude of his natural attributes. On no other could he look with so much self-complacency. “There is,” said Augustine, “but one object greater than the soul, and that object is its Creator.” Had God then not adopted a system of creation including *moral beings*, the highest place in the scale of created being had been vacant, and without them the interval between mere animal existence and God himself, had been unoccupied.

What then had been a system of creatures, endowed only

with animal sensation, compared with a system of beings capable of holy affections and holy activity, and each and all capable of possessing perfect, even the highest degree of happiness conceivable? If God were good, what else could he do but create *mind*—beings in his own image, with intelligence to know himself, his character, his will, his designs, his works; with hearts to burn with love, with wills to obey his perfect will—with conscience to feel the high deservings of right and wrong moral action, and to sway all the powers of the soul in the harmony of perfect virtue; beings with sympathies and social tendencies, capable of living in the past, the present, and the future—capable of entering into fellowship with God, and of awakening his confidence and his complacency as the executors of his high counsels; beings so powerful in intellect, as to be able to look with open face on the full effulgence of his Godhead, so capacious of heart as to receive the fullness of joy at his right hand, and who thus filled with all the fullness of God, might stand around his throne as mirrors of his own creation, to reflect the light of his glory forever? For such a creation what shall be substituted? The present system then, in respect to *the kind of beings* which it includes, is the best conceivable, and in this respect, there being no counteracting evidence, furnishes another independent and decisive proof of the Creator's goodness.

The same thing is true of the present system, *as it employs a moral influence*. After what has been already said, I may assume the position as incontrovertible, that the universal and perfect holiness of a moral creation is necessary to the highest conceivable happiness of such a creation. It is equally undeniable, that the kind of influence which is peculiar to *a moral system*, is indispensable to the production of holiness in the least degree in moral beings. It is of course necessary to the highest degree of holiness, and therefore to the highest degree of happiness.

In this view of this kind of influence, and of the system which includes it, the system has all the value which would pertain to a moral creation made perfectly blessed by perfect moral excellence. And who can estimate the worth of an influence which is indispensable to such a result? Who will attempt to conceive of any other as its substitute? Nor is this its only feature. There is a high and ennobling pleasure in

using this influence, nor scarcely less in feeling it. To uphold and move the material universe in all its regularity and beauty, to give form, and life, and activity to the whole intelligent creation—to pervade, sustain, and animate all as the handywork of Omnipotence, is a source of high delight to the infinite Author of all. But to influence mind—to be the author of that system of truth, of evidence, of motive, which is adapted to control and direct intelligent, free, moral beings, and to secure the high end of their existence—fitted to accomplish such a result in beings with powers adequate to defeat it—to bring forth an influence which shall give absolute perfection to a moral universe for eternity, without in the least infringing on the noble prerogative of their freedom, imposes a new demand on omnipotence, and imparts a grandeur and glory to God's dominion, which excludes from thought every other.

At the same time, to be the subject of such influence—to live under that system, and those manifestations of truth, which are thus adapted to move moral beings, and to secure such results—a system which has tasked the wisdom and the power of the infinite Being, and whose results can fail only through the perverseness of creatures, when in respect to the kind of influence God could do no more; to have such interests placed within one's own power—committed to choice, enlightened and guided by intelligence to comprehend them—to be able to secure the result designed by an act of will, and if secured, to say, "I have done it, when I could have done the opposite"—to live under a system, where the alternative is the self-perfection or self-destruction of an immortal being—this is to occupy a place of exaltation and dignity, which none can transcend or equal. If such a being rises, what a height of glory! If he falls, what ruin! The alternative is indeed tremendous, but is demanded by the essential perfection of the system, and its foreseen and glorious results. Every tendency justly estimated is adapted to a successful and triumphant issue. The influence from the doom foreseen is only salutary. It can be incurred only by voluntary perversion and fault; it can come only by the great law of choice between life and death, without which a more dreadful ruin must come to all—without which the infinite Being himself must sacrifice his perfect character, and with this his perfect blessedness.

Such then is the influence which is involved in the present,

as a moral system. How degrading to creatures, how unworthy of a perfect God, were any other in its stead! How repulsive, how revolting a system of coercion—or rather, what degrading absurdity in the thought of controlling moral beings by physical agency, or by the mechanism of cause and effect! The mind, created in God's image, must be governed, if at all, by the influence which moves him in all his doings—even by that truth which fixes and reveals the eternal relations of things, and gives the soul its life in perfect holiness and perfect bliss. Without this influence of the system, what will become of its issues, in all the self-complacency, free, voluntary, joyous activity, and eternal triumphs, of which perfected moral beings are capable? On this influence in distinction from every other, these results all depend. Its tendency is to produce such, and only such—even the highest conceivable good of the best conceivable system of creatures. This tendency of this influence in a system which is better than none, and which, for aught that can be shown to the contrary, is the best possible to the Creator, is as conspicuous, and as obviously designed by its Author to secure its benign and blessed results, as were they actually secured. The present system then, as it involves a moral influence in distinction from any other, is the best conceivable, and in this respect furnishes another independent and decisive proof of God's benevolence.

That the present system is the best conceivable, and therefore the best possible to the Creator, I argue—

2. From its more particular forms as a moral system. Here I appeal to it as comprising four particular forms of a moral system: that influence to secure perfection in character and in happiness, which results from the perceived nature and tendencies of moral action; the influence of a moral government; that of an equitable moral government; and that of an equitable moral government under a gracious economy.

In the first place, the present system comprises that influence to secure perfection in character and in happiness, *which results from the perceived nature and tendencies of moral action*. These are plainly and impressively manifested in the constitution and condition of the human mind. I need not here repeat the facts on this part of the subject, which have been so recently presented. In view of them, I may ask, what more in this respect could God have done? The answer is, nothing—

which for aught that appears to the contrary, would not have been for the worse. If we contemplate the knowledge of truth which is thus given to every mind, in its source, its nature, its power, can any thing be conceived in this respect to heighten the excellence of the system? It is knowledge of the fixed and immutable relations of right and wrong, given in the very nature and elements of our being; knowledge of good and evil in their highest conceivable degrees, and of the only means of obtaining the one and avoiding the other; knowledge of all that man need to know as a being made for immortality, that he may secure his perfection in character and in happiness; knowledge, which is pressed upon thought and susceptibility in experience, and as it were every moment; knowledge, which can be practically resisted and counteracted only by the most desperate violence and infatuation of which moral beings are capable; knowledge which even when thus resisted puts its firm grasp on the conscience and holds it there: still opens the bright visions of hope in the self-complacency of virtue, and reveals the terrors of self-condemnation in the remorse of guilt, and thus distinctly and at every step of life is telling man of a retribution in that heaven or hell which he carries in his own bosom; knowledge therefore which is fitted so far as knowledge from these sources can be, to secure in the best manner and in the highest degree, man's perfection in character and in happiness.

This tendency of this knowledge is as manifest as were the result actually secured. It is furnished in a system which is not only better than none, but which for aught that can be shown to the contrary, is the best possible to the Creator. It is therefore as obviously designed by the author of the system to secure the result which it is fitted to produce, as were that result actually secured. The present system then, as it comprises that influence from the perceived nature and tendencies of moral action, which is fitted to promote the highest blessedness of God's moral creation, furnishes another proof of the highest conceivable perfection of the system and of the benevolence of its author.

In the second place, the present system comprises a *moral government*. Moral government in the lowest import of the terms, includes a moral governor, a rule of action as the expression of his will—good promised to obedience and evil

threatened to disobedience. These things, though they do not necessarily include the *equitable* administration of a moral government, are essential to what can be properly called a moral government. Without now insisting on *the equity* of God's moral administration over men, still he is administering a moral government over them, and such a moral government as is consistent with the system's being the best possible, and also better than none. In this view of a moral government, I claim that it is an excellence which is essential to the perfection of the system. Let then the present system without, be compared with one which includes a moral government, and be contemplated in relation to the great end of a moral system. What would it be, when compared with one which exhibits the infinite Creator of men, as also their sovereign Lawgiver and Judge? In this relation that great Being is presented to the mind as taking a deeper, stronger interest in the moral conduct of his moral creatures as the means of their perfection and happiness, than in any and every thing besides. In this relation he makes a clear expression of his preference of right to wrong moral action on the part of every subject, and shows them that their highest interests can be secured only by obedience to his will. With their happiness and misery at his disposal, he authorizes only the expectation on their part that all depends on their conduct. Whatever conviction of duty then we may suppose men to derive from any other source—what additional strength and power must be given to that conviction by the clear and decisive promulgation of the will of God in exact accordance with it! How feeble and fluctuating—how evanescent, easily forgotten and disregarded the conviction derived from one source only, compared with the same derived from both; how must the conviction of duty first obtained from our nature and condition and the tendencies of moral action, be impressed by its known coincidence with the will, the law of Him who holds all destiny in his hands! While our very being reveals the absolute and unalterable law, that if we would be happy and not miserable we must be good, the execution of this law is made known in the immutable will and resistless power of an infinite being. But if we suppose no moral government over this world, then no evidence can be found of a retribution for the right and wrong doing of men. The distribution of good and

evil in this world is not in the lowest sense retributive. Aside from God's relation as a moral governor of men, legal sanctions—good and evil awarded to sustain authority—a Judge to approve and condemn, to reward and to punish are not to be thought of. But with a moral governor in view, and he no other than the infinite Creator of all, holding the allotment in the happiness and misery of every creature in his power, and giving a full indication of his purpose to make them in a high degree happy or miserable as they obey or disobey his will, what other influence can be substituted for this, in a system which is better than none, and which for aught that can be shown to the contrary, is the best possible? It is an influence which can be viewed in such a case as tending only to good, and to good in the highest conceivable degree. The present system therefore, as it comprises a moral government on the part of God, has another excellence which is essential to its highest conceivable perfection, and in this respect furnishes another independent and decisive proof of the benevolence of its author.

In the third place, the present system includes *an equitable moral government*. There is a sense in which *the equity* of a moral administration or of a moral government may imply *the benevolence* of the moral governor. I use this language however as I have before said, merely to characterize what may be called his providential dispensations as being in accordance with the principles of equity, whether we suppose him to be a benevolent or a selfish being. In other words, by the equity of God's moral administration over this world—I mean that his providential dispensations are what they would be on the supposition of his perfect benevolence, without assuming that such is his character. In this sense the equity of his administration whether he be a benevolent or a selfish being, consists in his giving the best law or rule of action, and in annexing to this law those sanctions in good and evil which express his highest approbation of right and highest disapprobation of wrong moral action, and which are requisite as such expressions to sustain his authority.

I claim to have shown already, that God is administering in the sense now stated, an equitable moral government over men, and that without so doing it would be impossible that he should show himself to be entitled to the least respect as a

moral governor. The impossibility of this on the supposition of his not giving the best law, will not be denied. So if we suppose him to annex to the best law, less degrees of natural good and evil than the highest as the sanctions of his law, it would show that he approves of right moral action less than supremely, and disapproves of wrong moral action less than supremely. Such a manifestation of feeling toward these objects would be decisive; that he does not regard things as they are; that he does not act on the principle of eternal rectitude—that of regarding the best kind of action as the best, and the worst kind of action as the worst; that instead of showing himself disposed to sustain his authority, and to employ this influence for the welfare of his kingdom, he acts on principles of partiality, favoritism, injustice, tyranny; that he is therefore a selfish and malignant being, and in no respect entitled to the homage of his subjects, or to the throne he occupies.

But in the present system, instead of thus subverting his authority as a moral governor by disproving his benevolence, God, as we have seen, adheres to strict equity in his moral administration. He gives the best law or rule of action, and by the requisite legal sanctions, expresses the highest approbation of right, and the highest disapprobation of wrong moral action. He does the very things in these essential respects which he would do were he a being of perfect benevolence; the very things, without which he cannot prove his benevolence and sustain his authority as a moral governor. For what other higher or better influence can be substituted for this, for the purpose of securing the greatest amount of right moral action, and thus the greatest amount of happiness, in a moral creation? Could any higher or better influence for the purpose be derived from natural good and evil, considered as merely so much motive employed to secure right and prevent wrong moral action? Could it result from giving any other law than the best—from expressing in the form of law any other preference than of the best kind of action? Could any higher or better influence for the same purpose result from legal sanctions, considered as the expressions of any other particular feelings or emotions toward right and wrong moral action, than those of the highest approbation of the one and the highest disapprobation of the other? In these respects plainly, no other influence conceivable can possess the same salutary tendency. In this way only can he

manifest those attributes of a perfect moral governor, which we call his *holiness, justice*;—*holiness* in all its love and complacency toward moral excellence, and in that inaccessible purity which recoils from, and in that withering abhorrence which forbids the approach of the least moral defilement;—*justice* in that serene and awful majesty of its inflexible purpose to sweep a rebellious world into the abyss of ruin, rather than suffer the least obscurity or infringement of his right to reign. Under no other manifestation of God, could obedience to his will be rendered as the will of a perfect being. There might indeed, be a moral system, and moral influences, and if you please, a moral government; but there could be no moral government in the hands of a perfect being; none in that distinctive character which results from the absolute prerogative of rightful dominion. Unless we see God through the medium of an equitable administration, we cannot see him as immutably holy and just, and can therefore never confide, love, and obey. In a word, it is only through an equitable moral administration, that God as a moral governor, can manifest his perfect character.

Now I do not say, that such an administration necessarily excludes all opposing evidence on the question of his moral character; but that when it exists, as it does in the present case without the least opposing evidence—when it exists as an element of a system, which, in view of its results, is, so far as we have seen, the best possible to the Creator, it can be viewed only as an essential element of the perfection of the system, and as such, another and decisive proof of its perfection and of the benevolence of its Author. In such a case, what other view can be taken of his giving his perfect law—perfect in its precept, and perfect in its sanctions—except that of the most unequivocal and decisive expression of his supreme and benevolent preference of right moral action, and as its consequence, the highest possible happiness of his moral creation? What can be the design of making such an expression of these feelings, in this most impressive form conceivable, except that by so doing he may secure this result? Were this actually accomplished by this means, who then could doubt its adaptation to the end, and the benevolent design of its Author? But its tendency to this result is a matter of absolute knowledge, and would be no more obvious than it now is were the result actu-

ally produced. And now, when the design of its Author to secure this result, instead of being obscured by the slightest shade of evidence to the contrary, is confirmed by the manifestation of his benevolence in every other form, this design is as conspicuous and undeniable as is the tendency to this result of the same element of the system. Neither can be denied or doubted. The design of God in administering an equitable moral government over men, in order that the end should be produced, for which it is perfectly adapted, stands forth as conspicuous as were that end actually accomplished in the highest conceivable happiness of his moral creation. In view then of the equity of God's moral administration, we say that it is one element of the best possible system, which is not only an indispensable, but an independent and decisive proof of equity in principle; thus revealing on the throne of moral dominion, a God of perfect holiness and perfect justice, and of course, a God of perfect benevolence.

In the fourth place, the present system is the best conceivable, as it includes an equitable moral government under an economy of grace. That God is administering such a government over men, I persuade myself has been shown in former lectures. We have seen that the manner in which he distributes good and evil in this world entirely harmonizes with an economy of grace; that while there is nothing in the whole history of his providence inconsistent with the strict principles of equity in his administration, there are still decisive intimations that he has not abandoned these principles—that every thing in the manner in which he treats this world of transgressors, clearly and impressively bespeaks his will that they should return to duty and to happiness, rather than continue in sin, and die forever. We see him furnishing to all the most decisive proofs that their highest happiness can be found only in obedience to his will—drawing them to repentance by the most powerful influence, that of manifested kindness; by those “cords of love and bands of a man,” which it would seem no perversity of heart could resist; dispensing natural evil, under the kindest forms of necessary moral discipline or paternal chastisement, with the obvious design to reclaim and bless his disobedient children—making the present state of man most obviously one of trial and of discipline, and as such, designed and fitted to form his character to permanent virtue and happiness—

placing man's present enjoyment so far and so clearly in his own power, as to show beyond the possibility of doubt, that a universal and perfect moral reformation would transform the world, darkened and afflicted as it is by sin and its woes, into a primeval paradise; thus in every conceivable form and mode of dispensation, clearly evincing his power to sustain such a system of justice and of grace—forbidding a surmise either of malignant intention, or of weak and indulgent connivance at iniquity, and so rendering every other supposition inadmissible, except, that while he sustains the principles of eternal righteousness inviolate, he is, in the fullness of love and mercy, aiming to restore a lost world to duty, to favor, and to happiness. Thus does the great Creator present himself to his guilty moral creation, A JUST GOD, AND YET A SAVIOUR.

Here then we see the crowning excellence of the present system. I shall not attempt to specify in detail those parts of God's providence which are eminently fitted to extend and heighten our admiration of this system of justice and of grace. To sustain the principles of eternal righteousness unsullied and unobscured, and show himself placable to the guilty, and even solicitous to reclaim and bless—to uphold in all their stability the pillars of his throne, and yet give it the attractions of a throne of grace—this is a system which combines with every other conceivable excellence, the highest, brightest of them all, that of an economy of grace. The present system then, in another respect, *i. e.*, as including an economy of grace, is the best conceivable.

The argument for God's benevolence, as thus furnished by the light of nature, may be thus presented. The present system with its results, is better than none; notwithstanding the evil which exists, the system may be the best possible to the Creator; while in its adaptations and tendencies to good, it is in every respect the best conceivable. God therefore is benevolent. Were a physician to perform an operation on a patient, which were better than to do nothing, and though connected with some pain, might still be the best possible, and in respect to all its tendencies, were it ascertained to be the best conceivable operation, who would doubt his benevolence.

Were it however my principal object here to prove the benevolence of God, I might proceed greatly to increase the force of the present argument. For having once shown, on the

premises now presented, that God is benevolent, it were perfectly legitimate to infer not merely that all existent evil *may be* consistent, but that it *is* consistent with his benevolence, either as the necessary means of the greatest good, or as incidental in respect to his prevention, to that system which is the necessary means of the greatest good.

In respect to natural evil, viewed as it must be, as the necessary means of the greatest good, instead of furnishing an objection to his benevolence, it becomes an additional proof of it. As to moral evil, viewed as it must now be: viz., as incidental in respect to divine prevention to a system in which God has done all that was possible to prevent it, and to secure universal holiness in its stead, it leaves the benignity of his design unobscured; and we are obliged to say, there is all the proof of God's benevolence, which there would have been, had the universal and perfect holiness and happiness of his moral creation been the actual result.

Having arrived at this point, I might bring forward, as still further proofs, furnished in the fact that he shows kindness to his creatures in every conceivable form which is consistent with their greatest good; and this, not in respect to its salutary tendencies and relations, in view of which it has given so much force to our preceding arguments, but under two very different relations: viz., as so much good or enjoyment merely, and as such, all that in degree, which is consistent with the highest good of the recipients; and also, as so much good conferred on sinful, ill-deserving creatures, whom, as a benevolent and just God, he might have utterly destroyed. To all this good, we must add the grand and glorious results of that system of grace and mercy in future and eternal happiness, as conferred on guilty beings whose endless destruction had been alike consistent with justice and benevolence.

Here let us then advert, first, to what had been the proofs of God's benevolence, had perfect holiness and happiness actually resulted to his moral creation. We have this proof at hand, for we have proved that he most truly and sincerely *designed* this result. Let us now advert again to what would have been the condition of this world of transgressors, had God, as he might, displayed his benevolence and been just, instead of displaying his benevolence in pardoning grace. Let the fearful results of exact retribution in the woes of the second death,

be compared with the riches of his long-suffering, and the ever-flowing streams of his providential bounty in this world, and with (as our previous argument authorizes us to expect in the world to come) the eternal blessedness of a multitude which no man can number, of pure, holy, and happy spirits, so vast, so glorious, that the few incorrigibly wicked whom necessity confines in the prison of state, shall be only as an unnoticed speck amid the overwhelming glory of the whole.

I have thus attempted to exhibit the proofs of God's benevolence, as shown by the light of nature. And what other or higher proofs could be furnished by his works or his doings, I am compelled to say, is beyond my power to conceive. Contemplated as a state of trial and preparation for results in eternity, the nature, the condition, and the prospects of man, manifest infinite wisdom and power, directed by infinite goodness, aiming at results which shall forever tell the Creator's capacity to bless. To specify an imperfection, or suggest an improvement, defies the power of the human intellect. This world then, must be esteemed not as furnishing merely some faint intimations, some slight grounds of conjecture that God is good, but as presenting to every eye that witnesses the operations of his hands, one of the brightest theaters of his infinite benevolence—a scene in God's creation, in which, counteracted indeed in its fullest results by human wickedness, it only awakes to new and unheard of desires and efforts to bless: benevolence which shines forth like a sun, when all that might seem to obscure its light, only serves to give new warmth and splendor to its beams. For in what brighter forms of love and goodness could God appear, than as the God of redemption to this guilty, lost world?

If now I have proved that God is a being of perfect benevolence, it follows that he administers his moral government over this world in the exercise of rightful authority. Having before proved that God administers a moral government over men in some proper import of the phrase; having shown that he administers his moral government in equity and in the exercise of rightful authority; I have established my leading proposition, that

**GOD ADMINISTERS A PERFECT MORAL GOVERNMENT OVER MEN.**

I conclude with one reflection on the views which have been given of the moral government of God over this world, viz. :

*How undesirable that Christianity were not a revelation from God.* If Christianity is not a revelation from God, still every thing of vital importance to man which Christianity says, is TRUE, except its grand peculiarity, the manner in which this world's redemption from sin is achieved—every thing is true, except its discovery of a triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in their respective relations to the work of man's redemption from sin. If Christianity is not a revelation, still there is an infinite being who has given existence to creatures, formed in his own image, and destined to live and to act, for weal or for woe, through a coming eternity. For the accomplishment of his eternal counsels, God has assumed the high relation of a perfect moral governor of these creatures of his power. Perfectly benevolent, he is also inflexibly just. He will never sacrifice the majesty of law, the glory of his moral dominion, and the happiness of his moral creation, in tenderness to rebels. His throne stands in all its grandeur on the pillars of eternal justice, and, though changed into a throne of grace, still in all its darkness and tempest, it speaks undiminished terror to the determined transgressor. It is changed into a throne of grace, but only to the rebel who is penitent and contrite in heart. It is a throne of grace, that, with its attractions and its charms, it may win rebellion to loyalty.

If then, Christianity is not a divine revelation, every thing (I mean every thing substantial, for I certainly admit that Christianity sheds a new and brighter light on all moral truths), with the exceptions made, which Christianity teaches, is TRUE. Every thing respecting God, man, time, and eternity—every relation of God to man, and of man to God—every relation, tendency, and consequence of right and wrong moral action—every foundation of hope, ground of fear, retrospect of the past, reality of the present, prospect of the future—the same probation, the same law, the same economy of mercy, the same judgment and retribution, the same heaven and hell—all, all in every great and substantial respect, is the same. Christianity, with the exception made, is only a republication in brighter characters, of the truths of God and of nature—of God and nature immutable as its author. If Christianity then is not a divine revelation, where are we? Just where we are if it is a revelation, with this difference, the light it sheds on the scheme

of redemption is extinguished! *How the perverseness of rebels is to be subdued to love, and if subdued, how can a just God receive them to favor*; here all is mystery unsolvable—darkness impenetrable, even appalling! Man, a sinner, and guilty as he is, I admit *might* repent, and *might* hope for mercy from his Maker. But would he? Man, in the bondage of sin, what chains so strong?—man, dead in sin, what death so hopeless? who shall deliver? what power shall raise to life, give health, and strength, and beauty immortal to this victim of sin and death but the power of him who made him? Man, I said, might hope for mercy. But with a clear perception of his fearful guilt and God's fearful justice; when looking at a sin-avenging God as he must, and asking, *how* can such a God show the same abhorrence of sin and yet forgive, which he would show by the endless destruction of a rebellious world, then it is that the fears and dismay of guilt take hold on the spirit, and hope trembles, falters, expires. I say not that it must be so, but that it always has been, and always will be, at least with exceptions not to be named. For remember, it is not the hope of the infidel that we need—the hope that God *is unjust*—the hope like his, that reposes in a selfish, malignant deity; it is not the hope which fancy and the love of sin beget, and which rushes fearless on the thick bosses of Jehovah's buckler, without knowing who or what he is; it is the hope which looks upon a just God, and with a sense of his righteous indignation, reposes sweetly in his mercy. And yet there is so much terror here, there is so much midnight darkness and thunder, that the feeble rays of mercy do not suffice. Guilt will look up with confidence only when it sees the throne of God upheld by the man that is his fellow. Take away "the incarnate mystery," extinguish the light which reveals the great atonement of Christianity, (ignorance and presumption might indeed hope in a selfish deity, in an unjust God, and realize a just perdition), but extinguish this light, the light which reveals God's mercy through his Son, and let in the terrors of guilt and of God on this sinful world, and how would they weep and howl in the frenzies of despair! Thanks—may I not say it—thanks to the impostor, if such he was, who devised the great atonement of the gospel. Falsehood—can we say less?—falsehood is better than truth! Imposture? Falsehood? No. Here is the seal of God. It is just the atone-

ment which man needs, the atonement which he must have, to embolden conscious guilt to approach a spotless God; the only atonement which will in fact, give hope and peace and heaven to a guilty world. God devised it. God revealed it, that all other manifestations of his mercy might not be in vain. With no known instance of actual forgiveness, with no formal declaration of God that he will forgive, with the burden of conscious guilt upon us, and with no possible conception of any expedient by which God could show mercy, we should in fact, be conducted to the most fearful forebodings of wrath. In this midnight of gloom and terror all our research and all our reasonings would actually terminate. And back again to this midnight, from the light which beams upon us from the gospel of God would the infidel conduct us. Let him go, if he will, into all this darkness and dwell amid its terrors. Let him go, if he will, to the bar of a just God on the footing of his own righteousness, and be tried by his innocence or his merit; let him trust an unjust, selfish, malignant deity, for he has no other God. But give me hope in a God of mercy. I speak what you feel, and what I feel, when I say, I am a sinner—a sinner against a holy, just, and perfect God. I need his mercy. I am a guilty, lost immortal. I need deliverance from deserved and endless misery. Oh! hide not from me the mercy, the abundant mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

## LECTURE XI.

### APPLICATION OF THE ARGUMENT FROM NATURE, TO PROVE THAT CHRISTIANITY IS FROM GOD.

Nature of Divine Revelation.—Argument for its necessity.—Different views of the grounds of this.—I. Not necessary, because man cannot discover moral and religious truth: but II. Necessary, 1. To make known the truth in the most perfect method, especially by language.—Absurdity of objecting to this medium.—2. To receive the practical influence of such truth.—The experiment by the light of nature decisive, shown by the ancient philosophers.—Their views scanty, vacillating, erroneous.—Practical influence feeble on themselves and others.—Prevalence of immorality.—Their teachings and example limited.

By a divine revelation, we may understand some mode adopted by our Creator of imparting the knowledge of religious and moral truth to the human mind, more direct than any such knowledge obtained by the light of nature; or employing human reason on the character, the works and providence of God. On the question whether a divine revelation is necessary to man, the parties have, in my view, often adopted unqualified assertions, which are erroneous and even fatal to a satisfactory conclusion.

On the one hand, it has been affirmed that all the knowledge which is necessary or useful to man as a moral being may be obtained from the works of God, and that every other mode of discovering truth to the human mind on the part of God, is impossible, incredible, and useless. On the other, *the utter insufficiency* of human reason to make the least useful discovery of moral and religious truth from the mere light of nature, and the consequent absolute necessity of a direct revelation from God, have been strenuously maintained. It is true, that some of the advocates for the necessity of a revelation, concede that the light of nature furnishes the means of much important knowledge, and often seem to contend only for the necessity of further discoveries by the light of revelation. And yet the same writers assert with frequency, "that human reason CAN-

nor attain any certain knowledge of the will or law of God, or of the true happiness of man."\* This incongruity, which appears to characterize the discussions on this subject by leaving the real question vague and indeterminate, has contributed in no small degree to unsettle opinions and to perpetuate discussion. To what extent the necessity of a divine revelation exists, and what are *the precise grounds or reasons* of it, are points of the first importance to all satisfactory views on the subject, as well as to the termination of the controversy with the opposers of revelation.

It may be admitted generally and indefinitely, that a revelation is necessary to man, and yet its ends or purposes, and the extent, grounds, or reasons of the necessity, may be left undecided. In a state of utter darkness, light is necessary as the only medium of vision. But we may suppose a degree of light adequate for a distinct sight of surrounding objects, and yet that a man should refuse to see them, and this in a case in which greater light would result in actual vision. In the one case, light is necessary, because man *cannot* see without it; in the other, to secure his actual vision, because he *will not*. Again, there may be a degree of light adequate to the distinct vision of some objects and not of others; and the consequence may be, either that neither class of objects will be seen, or that the former only will be. In these cases, the particular purposes or ends, on account of which greater light is necessary, are different, as are the objects to be seen. The grounds or reasons of the necessity differ—greater light in the one case, being necessary to *actual* vision of any of the objects; in the other, necessary to the actual vision of all the objects. Further; a greater degree of light may be necessary, not because man cannot, nor because he will not see every object, but to enable him to see every object with greater distinctness and effect than would otherwise be possible.

So in respect to a divine revelation. It may be necessary for a great variety of particular purposes or ends, and the grounds or reasons of the necessity in respect to these ends may be very different. To maintain the general proposition that a divine revelation is necessary, is not fitted to convey precise and definite views on this important subject, nor to

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terminate this part of the controversy with the opposers of revelation.

While therefore, I maintain the general doctrine, that a divine revelation is necessary to man, to prevent misapprehension,

I remark—

I. That a divine revelation is *not* necessary to this world, because man *cannot* discover much moral and religious truth without it. The advocates of the utter incompetence of human reason to make any such discoveries, seem to have fallen into the error, by mistaking the lamentable ignorance of the world, for proof of an entire incapacity for knowledge, and from a misguided zeal to magnify the gift of a revelation, and the grace that conferred it. That this mode of reasoning is unauthorized, may be confidently decided, in view of its intrinsic deficiency, and on the authority of revelation itself. It is intrinsically deficient, since the mere fact of ignorance is no proof of incapacity for knowledge. In revelation itself the ignorance and crimes of the heathen world are never traced to incapacity for knowledge, but the clear manifestation of God, and the consequent inexcusableness of man both for his ignorance and his crimes, are constantly asserted, and these are traced to the humiliating fact "that men did not like to retain God in their knowledge."

The attempt to exalt the grace of God in the gift of a revelation by depreciating man's capacity for knowledge, is still more to be regretted. Admit, as the reasoning assumes, the entire incompetence of the human mind to obtain any knowledge of religious truth, and the grace of God in conferring a revelation on the world is wholly subverted. On the part of men there could be neither obligation nor crime. The necessity of a revelation is created by their Maker and not by themselves. Revelation could not be a gift to a *sinful* world, criminally resisting the light of truth and perverting the means of knowledge, and thus deserving to be given up to a reprobate mind. But it is a provision absolutely necessary to constitute men moral and accountable beings, and therefore demanded, if they are held responsible for their conduct by every principle of equity. It is a matter of debt, of justice; and grace is no more grace. This attempt therefore, to magnify the grace of God in the gift of a revelation wholly defeats its object.

In proof of the position that the human mind is competent to discover much important truth without a revelation, I might appeal to what I have already shown to be true concerning God and concerning man, from the mere light of nature. I might appeal also to the actual discoveries of such truth, especially to the writings of many of the ancient philosophers.

The appeal to revelation itself on this point would be still more decisive. On this authority it might be shown that man *can* know the very truths to a considerable extent, without a revelation, which the advocates for its necessity affirm that he cannot know without it. For example, the being and perfections of God, his moral government, his moral character; the law of his moral government, and of course the sum of human duty—to a great extent the specific duties toward God, toward man, and toward himself; the doctrines of human sinfulness, of the necessity of a change of moral character; the placability of God; the immortality of the soul, future rewards and punishments.

Here it would be a very useful inquiry, how far the Scriptures will bear us out in the assertion of this matter of fact—not only by appealing to their explicit declarations, and their clear implications, but especially to the variety of forms, and to the great extent in which the sacred writers make the previous knowledge of mankind the basis of their reasonings, instead of resting on their authority as inspired teachers, although this is never abandoned.

But whatever ground the advocate of Christianity may take, the infidel will admit that the human mind is competent to discover much religious and moral truth without a revelation.

I proceed to show—

II. That a divine revelation is necessary to the world—

(1.) To give the highest conceivable perfection to *the mode* of making known the truth to the human mind.

(2.) *To any extensive and useful discovery of truth to the human mind.*

(3.) *To the discovery of some important truths, which man could not discover without it.*

(1.) *A divine revelation is necessary to the highest conceivable perfection of the mode of making known the truth to the human mind.* There are only two conceivable modes of discovering truth to the human mind by our Creator: viz., through the

medium of his works of creation and providence and by a revelation. My object is not to compare the excellence or desirableness of these two modes, but simply to show that the mode which combines both, is better than that which should include but one; or rather is the best conceivable. Nor does my object require me to examine the different *specific modes* of making a revelation which are possible, although it were easy to show the superiority of that mode to every other in which it is claimed that God has made a revelation. I speak only of some mode of revelation, as additional to the mere light of nature, and maintain that *it is indispensable to the highest conceivable perfection in the mode of discovering religious and moral truth to the human mind.* This position is, to my own mind, so palpably obvious, that had it not been denied, it could scarcely require or justify an attempt to prove its truth. Who does not know the power of speech and written language to convey truth with peculiar precision, clearness, and effect? Why is it that the very men who deny all revelation, and profess, while so doing, to impart to the world the light of truth, resort to oral and written language as the medium of conveyance? Why not leave the world to spell out truth on this great question from the nature of things, as affording ample light without the addition of speech and writing to instruct them? Plainly because they believe that by this addition they adopt the most effective mode of imparting knowledge and of giving it permanence, impression, and prevalence in the minds of other men. And will they pronounce their own condemnation, by pronouncing that mode of conveying truth useless, on which themselves rely as the best? And if not useless on the part of men, why useless on the part of God? God has confessedly formed the human mind to be taught and instructed by himself, through the medium of his works. And is it not equally manifest that he has formed the human mind to be taught and instructed through the medium of language? Is not this mode of conveying knowledge one which involves every facility and every advantage? If God has qualified men to learn truth from what he does, has he not also qualified them to learn truth from what he says? Why then should it be thought a thing incredible, that God should adopt one method as well as the other, or rather, that he should adopt both? If his children are to read and learn his character, will,

and designs, their duty and destiny from his teachings, why not avail himself of their capacity to be taught through the medium of language? Why may he not instruct them by his words as well as by his works; why not give them two books as well as one—the book of revelation as well as the book of nature? Would not the latter mode be as *natural*, as effectual—as truly in accordance with their accustomed manner of learning truth as the former? Are not the advantages of the latter so great, so obvious, as to render it exceedingly desirable to all who would wish to learn? Why is it that we wish every thing in art, science, literature, history, morals, and religion, that is true and of importance to be known, reduced to writing? Why is it that laws must be written and published, that contracts, bonds, deeds, mortgages, every title to an estate, must be put upon record? Because this is confessedly the most perfect method of securing the knowledge of facts. No man is ignorant of the importance and necessity of written records and books on every subject of moment pertaining to this world. And yet if we speak of a book from God, teaching man how to secure the great end for which God made him, we talk of a useless book—aye, of one worse than useless. Books from men, even on religion, if it be of the right sort, are of inestimable value; but a book from God, teaching such a religion as God might be supposed to teach, would be a thing of naught. You cannot feel too much contempt for it! And this is a consistency of which to boast!

But not to dwell on absurdity so glaring, let us for a moment reflect on the end to be secured and the mode of accomplishing it. The end is, so to instruct this sinful world in religious and moral truth, that it shall become effectual to its moral reformation. Now, without disparaging at all the light of nature, without supposing God to reveal one other truth to man than what may be learned from it, I ask what *mode* of bringing this very system of truth before the human mind would be best fitted to the end to be accomplished? Simply that which we call the light of nature, or that which should combine with it—the light of a revelation through the medium of human language. Such a revelation, such books from deists, from infidels, are at least regarded by themselves as an improvement in the method of imparting instruction to men. Why then may we not suppose that such a book as God could make, would

also be an improvement on their productions? Suppose then God to qualify certain men, to declare the same system of truth to the world through the medium of written language; suppose him to give the most indubitable proofs that they are thus qualified and commissioned by God himself for this work; let us suppose the book actually written, containing simply that system of truth which the light of nature discloses, presenting these sublime doctrines concerning God—his nature, his character; the great facts respecting man—his nature, his character, his destiny; his relations to him, promulgating the great law of God's moral government in its perfect requirement; its diverse specific precepts, its high and awful sanctions; making known an economy of mercy, unfolding with new clearness a future state with its regions of immortality in bliss and woe—let us suppose this system of truth set forth to the human mind in all the simplicity, perspicuity, force, and conclusiveness of which human language admits; by argument, illustration, exemplification; shown to us in real life, embodied in rites of worship, and carried out in all the forms of human action; presented in history, poetry, parables, allegory, epistles—in every conceivable form fitted to render it intelligible, impressive; easy to be fixed in the memory, and ready for use at all times; accessible to all minds, fitted to all classes of men in all circumstances and relations; capable of being brought in all its clearness and power on the human mind, from the beginning of moral and accountable agency, and ever and always from its own pages, as well as through its ordinances and appointed ministry, pouring its light over a world like the sun in mid-heaven. Suppose God to give such a book to this world, having that perfection which his own inspiration could give it, would it be no valuable addition to the mere light of nature? Would such instruction from God possess no value? Would this light from heaven, truth enforced by the authority of God, the very testimony of the living God, be nothing? Would it be nothing to man that his God should speak to him? Or, is such a revelation from God absolutely necessary to *give the highest conceivable perfection to the mode of discovering religious and moral truth to the human mind?* Let any honest man who understands the use and power of language answer this question.

(2.) *A divine revelation is necessary to secure to any extent,*

*the practical influence of religious and moral truth on the human mind.*

In support of this position I shall attempt to show, that such an experiment has been made, as to prove, that the great end of man's creation would be entirely defeated without a revelation from God. In other words, facts enable us to decide what the human intellect would accomplish in the discovery of religious and moral truth, and what would be the practical results under the mere light of nature; and that these discoveries and results show that the moral reformation of men would never be accomplished to any considerable extent, without a divine revelation.

The question is not as to *the sufficiency* of this light, but as to its actual efficacy in leading men to duty and to happiness. **HAS IT IN FACT EVER DONE IT?**

I appeal then in the first place, *to the ancient heathen philosophers.* And here I might say, there is great reason to believe that nothing in the writings of these philosophers, of the least value either in theology or morals, was strictly the result of their own mental efforts. Many of them confess that they derived their knowledge from very ancient traditions, to which they assigned a divine origin. "What Socrates said of the deity," observes Dryden, "what Plato writ, and the rest of the heathen philosophers of several nations, is all no more than the twilight of revelation, after the sun of it was set in the race of Noah;" while the Christian fathers furnish abundant proof that Plato especially learned much from the Hebrews while he was in Egypt. Of Zoroaster, of whom deists have had much to say, it has been shown by Dr. Hyde in his treatise "*De Religione Veterum Persarum,*" that Zoroaster had been a disciple of one of the Jewish prophets, and that all the writings ascribed to this philosopher are unquestionably spurious. I cannot but add here the apparent prediction, but yet real conjecture of Plato, founded probably on the traditions and truths he derived from the Jews in Egypt. He says, "We cannot know of ourselves what petition will be pleasing to God, or what worship to pay him, but that it is necessary that a lawgiver should be sent from heaven to instruct us;" and such a one did he expect; and "oh," says he, "how greatly I do desire to see that man and who he is!" He goes further, and declares this lawgiver must be *more than a man*, "for since every nature is

governed by another nature that is superior to it, as birds and beasts by man, he infers that this lawgiver who was to teach man what he could not know by his own nature, must be of a nature superior to man—that is, of a divine nature.” He gives indeed, as lively a picture of the person, qualifications, life, and death of this divine man, as had he been acquainted with the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He says “that this just person must be poor, and void of all recommendations but that of virtue alone; that a wicked world would not bear his instructions and reproof; and that therefore within *three or four years* after he began to preach he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and at last be put to death.” Would it then be strange if all in the writings of Plato and other ancient philosophers, which has been held up to our admiration, should have been directly or indirectly derived from divine revelation?

Laying aside however, this consideration, and conceding all that can be claimed in respect to the unaided powers of the ancient philosophers, let us inquire what they actually accomplished in morals and religion. The answer must be admitted to be decisive upon the point before us. The fact appealed to, is that of the employment of the most powerful human intellects on this subject, with unparalleled devotion, and under the highest advantages. Who will pretend that more would ever be accomplished in this department of human knowledge, under the mere light of nature, than was done by Socrates, Plato, Seneca, Cicero, and other eminent philosophers of antiquity? When has the world seen, when could it expect to see, men of brighter genius, of higher intellectual power, of superior literary accomplishment, of such unrivaled industry, toil, and self-consecration too, in philosophic research? Whatever may be thought of the intellectual stature of Bolingbroke, Gibbon, Hume, and Voltaire, they appear diminutive compared with these giants of the Academy and the Lyceum.

What then did these philosophers accomplish? What for themselves, and what for the world?

And here we have no occasion to deny any excellence or impute any imperfection or defect which is not real, in their systems of philosophy. It is conceded then that passages may be found which *seem* to express exalted conceptions of God and of some of his attributes. In some of their moral codes, par-

ticularly in the *Ethics* of Aristotle and the *Offices* of Cicero, some beautiful theories of morals and precepts fitted for the regulation of external conduct are to be found. Some of them admit that virtue is the chief good and its own reward; and some of them, at times at least, indulged in sublime speculations respecting the nature and immortality of the soul. But after all, what was the amount of their knowledge or belief on these great subjects, and what were the actual results to them and to the world?

While some of these philosophers asserted the being of God, others openly denied it; few, probably none of them believed God, in the proper sense, to be the Creator of the world; most of them were polytheists, and all of them either sincerely or hypocritically sanctioned, defended, and practiced idolatrous worship, and enjoined it as the duty of every citizen.

In respect to a future state, whatever may be said of their arguments, the best of the philosophers spoke DOUBTFULLY; none of them applied the fact to its proper use and end; most of them entertained of it the most puerile and contemptible conceits. They did believe in future punishment, and their ideas of future rewards were so indefinite, low, and sensual, as to give no importance to their faith. In short, as to the merit and demerit of right and wrong moral action, the happiness and misery in kind and degree of which the soul is capable, a just judgment of a righteous God, and the grand and awful idea of accountability—they believed nothing—or at least entertained conceptions so inadequate and so false as to amount to nothing.

In respect to *morals*, nothing like a true system was to be found in the writings of any one of them, nor of all of them together. On the great, the vital question—in fact the only question—viz., in what does the supreme happiness of man consist, Varro tells us that there were three hundred different opinions among the philosophers. Cicero says, that these opinions were so numerous and discordant that it is impossible to enumerate them; while it may be added, that in respect to the true nature of moral excellence—viz., disinterested love—true benevolence either in God or man—no one of them seems to have formed a conception. Where this is not understood, it is in vain to talk of morals, of piety, or religion. Every thing is wrong in principle. Call it by what names you will, ascribe

to it what restraining and regulating power you will on the conduct of the life, it is nothing but the selfish principle, the sum and essence of all moral evil. Did these philosophers then ever teach intelligibly and truly, that love to God and love to man is the sum and substance of all moral excellence?—that love is the fulfilling of the law—and that all else without it is in a moral respect nothing but sin? So far as I can find, never in any decisive instance, while, with the exception of a few, instead of inculcating the expression of this principle in loving enemies and forgiving injuries, they accounted revenge lawful and commendable. Pride and ambition (principles which have caused more wretchedness on earth than any other), were esteemed *the best* incentives to virtuous and noble deeds. Suicide was deemed lawful, and a proof of true heroism. Lying lawful, when profitable; theft, adultery, fornication, infanticide, cruelty to children, inhumanity to slaves, degradation of the female sex, gratification of sensual appetite and unnatural lusts; in a word, the most flagitious practices were countenanced on the part of the philosophers, both by argument and example.

Even the doctrines of the wisest and best, notwithstanding the slight hints or the faint and transient glimpses of truth they include, were as a whole, uncertainty, darkness, jargon, puerility. What truth concerning God, his character, law, government; or concerning man, his character, his relations, his prospects, at all fitted in its combination with error, to give any just or adequate conception of either God or man, or to reform a lost world? The answer is given in matter of fact. Philosophers, statesmen, poets, priests, and people, were avowedly addicted to the most abominable uncleannesses and crimes; the gods they worshiped were guilty of the same enormities; their sacrifices were deformed with cruelty and the most horrid rites; their sacred groves were consecrated to prostitution, their temples were brothels. Think of such worship rendered to the three hundred Jupiters mentioned by Varro, or to the three hundred and sixty-five gods mentioned by Orpheus, or to thirty thousand by Hesiod—gods celestial, aerial, terrestrial, and infernal; gods worshiped by rites profane, cruel, debauched; gods worshiped by shameless prostitution and the immolation of human victims! With this entire corruption of all religion was of course connected an equal corruption of morals

both in public and private life. Fraud, theft, injustice, suicide, adultery, fornication, systematic abortions, murder of infants, and the most unnatural crimes, ambition, hatred, and fell revenge; gladiatorial shows, and all the atrocious cruelties of war and rapine not only abounded but were patronized, countenanced, authorized by law, connived at and practiced by statesmen and philosophers, and publicly reprobated by none. From this source, the corruption of all religion and morals, aided by the depravity of the human heart, flowed forth a torrent of crimes and abominations desolating a world of all that is good and happy in virtue and religion, and leaving all, all in moral darkness and moral death. Its state became more and more hopeless as time rolled on. Even in the land of Judea the last feeble rays of divine truth were almost extinct, while this vast portentous cloud hung over the nations, thickening, darkening, and foreboding only the blackness of darkness forever.

I now ask, whether God has not made a sufficient experiment on the question, what human reason would accomplish in the discovery of religious and moral truth, and what would be the practical results under the mere light of nature? What reason or shadow of reason is there to believe that modern deists, or any other men, or any individual man, under the mere light of nature, and to the end of time, would have become wiser or better than Socrates, Plato, Seneca, or Cicero? When or where has human genius shone more brightly, or the power and majesty of the human intellect more excited our admiration and wonder than in the poets, the orators, the legislators, the philosophers of antiquity? And when, to the end of the world, could we hope for better results in the discovery of moral truth in the formation of moral character? What then could be hoped for from philosophy, from human reason, under the mere light of nature? Is not the experiment absolutely decisive? Is not the necessity of a divine revelation to secure to any extent the salutary practical influence of religious and moral truth on the human mind, placed beyond all denial?

In confirmation of this argument, if it can need any, we might appeal to many other considerations. So far as there was any thing really commendable in the instructions of the philosophers, they were delivered to their immediate pupils, and in no respect to the great mass of the community. Indeed,

their ethical systems were far too refined for the common people; their discourses being rather subtle disputations, where truth was left obscure, doubtful, and subject to controversy. Nothing was settled. What one affirmed, another denied. What could be expected of the common people, when the penetration and the labors of the philosophers resulted in disagreement, contradiction, and uncertainty? Allow that they discovered and proved some truths in speculation, what authority could they give them in practice? What philosopher could secure submission to his rules of life; or what can human law effect in the renovation of the heart? "Your systems of virtue," says Tertullian, "are but the conjectures of human philosophy, and the power which commands is merely human; so that neither the rule nor the power is indisputable; and hence the one is too imperfect to instruct us fully, the other too weak to command us effectually; but both these are effectually provided for by a revelation from God. Where is the philosopher that can so clearly demonstrate the true good as to fix the notion beyond dispute? And what human power is able to reach the conscience and bring down that notion into practice? Human wisdom is as liable to error as human power is to contempt." What would be the influence of a system of truth coming from man, compared with that of the same system clothed with God's authority? In addition to all this, let the idolizers of human reason remember that the wisest of the ancient philosophers and legislators were fully convinced, by their own experience, on this great question. Socrates and Plato both confessed that they needed a divine revelation to instruct them in matters of the greatest consequence. Cicero and others, instead of the vain conceits of some modern deists respecting the powers of man employed in religious and moral inquiries, often acknowledged their imbecility and darkness. These great men were so impressed with the actual state of the world, and the waywardness and corruption of the human heart, that they not only often acknowledged that there were no human means of reformation, but expressed a strong hope and expectation, that God would one day give to man a revelation that should dispel the dark cloud in which the human mind was involved. In short, it is notorious that nearly the whole system of religion and of worship, with its sanctions of future rewards and punishments, with its oracles, divina-

tions, mysteries, were in fact *political expedients, useful fictions*, originated and perpetuated by legislators, from the necessity of keeping the people in awe, and under greater veneration for human laws. If the world could stand without a *real* revelation, experience had proved at least one thing, that it could not stand without a *pretended* revelation from God. After such an experiment then, an experiment which left the world in a most deplorable condition of darkness, crime, and wretchedness; an experiment which convinced the very men that made it of its utter inefficacy; which actually led them to abandon all hope of the world's reformation without a revelation from God, and which actually compelled them to resort to the pretense of such a revelation, to give even any salutary restraining influence to human law; I say, who after such an experiment can doubt the absolute necessity of a revelation from God, to secure to any extent the reforming influence of moral truth on the human mind?

One brief reflection! What a value does the view we have taken of this world, of the ignorance, the depravity, the crimes, the miseries of mankind in every age and in almost every country for six thousand years, give to Christianity, and this, whether it be a revelation from God or not. Who will not read and study the Bible, whether he be an infidel or a Christian? Christianity, as a system of morals, whether it be of God or not, *is true*. Here, here, it gives light where all was uncertainty, confusion, darkness, without it. Here, where the thickest gloom of moral midnight overspread a lost world, it comes as the morning sun to remove the darkness and reveal the day. Nor is this all. In its proposed way of our acceptance with an offended God, if there is any way—I mean in the general form of an atonement for sin—it is also *true*. The great question then, in every substantial respect, is not between Christianity and Infidelity, but between Christianity and nothing. If Christianity is false, Infidelity is false. Reject the morals of Christianity as false, and all here is midnight. We can know nothing to be true. Reject also the great fact of some atonement for sin, under the government of a just and perfect God, and there is no mercy, no hope. Oh, how would Socrates, how would Plato, have hailed such light as this! Who that has it shall despise it? Who will not study, understand, apply, such truth as the Bible contains? Whose eye

will not weep, and whose heart not break, that a fellow-creature, a friend, a companion, is not willing to read this book and weigh with candor the evidence of its origin from God? Oh! what maniac madness to sport on the verge of eternity, with the dream that Christianity is false—an immortal mind, denying such truth, and attempting to sustain and cheer itself, as it were, at the foot of God's judgment-seat, with the empty, vapid declamation about the sufficiency of human reason—and this with the knowledge of the fact, that for six thousand years this boasted human reason has only plunged a lost world into error, sin, and death, without hope! And if all these were without excuse, what will, what must become of the man who will not love the truth, and embrace the truth, and obey the truth, which he knows Christianity reveals?

## LECTURE XII.

**Argument for necessity of revelation continued: Prop. 2 continued—Revelation necessary to secure the practical influence of the truth.—Argued from the state of Pagan nations at present.—From the influence of Deism.—Deists greatly indebted to Christianity.—The influence of their systems is feeble, scanty and uncertain, denies the holiness and justice of God.—Their views of sin and repentance defective.—Their morality superficial.—Men are not made better by them.—Little zeal for reforming men by them.—Give no comfort in death.—Prop. 3. Revelation necessary to make known truth undiscoverable without it.—Conclusion.**

In continuing the argument for the necessity of a divine revelation to any useful discovery of truth, I appeal—

In the second place, to the state of pagan nations at the present time.

This point needs no illustration. The facts on this subject are familiar to all, and they carry with them their own inferences.

In the third place, *I appeal to the influence of Deism.* It is claimed by that class of philosophers called deists, that the book of nature is the only book to be studied, or that deism as a system derived from human reason under the light of nature, is all that is requisite actually to instruct and guide the world in respect to religion and morals.

My first remark on this part of the subject is, that this class of philosophers, have derived the best parts of their system from the very revelation which they reject and affect to despise. Let it then be conceded, that in their system of faith there is much truth concerning God and concerning man—truth, which human reason *rightly employed*, might and would discover under the mere light of nature. But it is one thing to grant that these doctrines of deism are *discoverable*, and quite another to affirm, that they have been *actually discovered* by the light of nature. What then is the fact? It is here to be remarked, that the name of deist was unknown till about the year 1565, when Christianity had been in the world more than fifteen centuries. How then did it happen, that Socrates, and Plato, and Aristotle, and all the wisest philosophers groped

in such darkness during so many ages, and that this purified and perfect system of truth called deism, should be first discovered and taught by men who lived and were educated under the meridian sun of Christianity? Had these men at this period of the world, made such advances in knowledge as to leave the philosophers of Greece and Rome and all other nations out of sight, and to be able effectually to guide themselves and the rest of the world by their own reason? Can they lay claim to superior genius or mental culture; or did the light of nature shine brighter on them than on all who lived before? This cannot be pretended. No; what they knew, and all they knew, more than was known and taught by the sages of antiquity, they learned from God's revelation. Christianity had shamed away the grosser errors and vices of the pagan philosophy, and shed its blazing light so intensely on the mind, as to compel men as it were to see its perfect system of moral and religious truth, and to adopt so much of it as to shield them from contempt. They stole a torch from the temple of God and called it the light of their own reason. The fact cannot be mistaken—the pretension to discovery is ridiculous. As well might a New Zealander residing among the discoveries in the arts and sciences made in Christendom for the last hundred years, pretend to be their sole author. Are not such pretensions to discovery from the light of nature ridiculous, contemptible, beyond all possible respect?

But I will waive this point, and ask, what is this system of truth which is to accomplish so much for the moral reformation of the world? No one can tell what it is! To whom shall we apply—where shall we find it? Shall we resort to the deistical writers *en masse* and listen to their instructions? But the ear is stunned with contradiction, inconsistency, disagreement, controversy, mutual censure and recrimination without end. When it must be *optional* in the highest sense with all to adopt one or another or none of these systems, what is to be expected but the same jargon among the disciples, as prevails among the masters; or rather, what but the rejection of every system? Or if every one is to read and judge for himself, what will be the consequence but confusion, compared with which that of Babel were harmony of sweetest music? Who that knows any thing of man, or of the experience of past ages, will not regard as perfectly ridiculous the scheme of bringing this

world to receive any system even of truth, which has no higher authority than that of human reason.

But further, without insisting on this fatal obstacle, there is yet another. Their system can possess no authority, not even that of reason itself. The most perfect system of deism consists in these particulars, that there is one God possessing infinite natural and moral perfection; that God is to be worshiped and served in the forms of piety and of virtue; that God will forgive our sins against him on condition of repentance; and that he will reward the good and punish the bad in a future state. Now I readily admit that these propositions are all true, in their proper import, and that they can all be proved to be true, by human reason. But what I now maintain is, that the *infidel* cannot, *by reason*, prove any one of them to be true. He cannot, because he denies the premises by which alone these propositions can be thus proved to be true. He denies the justice of God, the equity of his moral administration over this world; and, denying this, he can prove nothing concerning God or man of the nature of religious or moral truth arising out of the character of God, or the relations between God and man. Denying that God is just as a moral governor, he cannot prove that God is benevolent. Denying that perfect benevolence in God involves in its very nature exact and perfect justice, he denies the very nature of benevolence; he denies an essential element of all moral rectitude, and utterly subverts the distinction between right and wrong. The God of Infidelity then is not, and cannot be, a benevolent God, but is and must be a selfish and malignant deity. This spoils alike its entire system of theology and of morals. A God of such a character cannot have the least claim to any worship or service from man, either in the form of piety or virtue. With such a view of God, there can be no love, no confidence, no gratitude, no piety, no virtue toward him, for there is no fit object of these affections. All moral relations between him and his moral creation are subverted. Moral obligation, obedience, disobedience, sin, duty, can have no place. Where is moral obligation? Such a God has no right to command. Where is obedience or disobedience? He has no authority. Where is the standard of duty? The will of God is the will of a selfish or malignant being. Where is the object of one right affection? God is exhibited only as an object of abhorrence

and of dread. Where is sin against God? It were sinful to love, and right to hate such a being. Where is repentance? There is no cause for contrition in the past, and no return to duty for the future. Where is forgiveness? There is nothing to be forgiven. Where is the ground of trust or hope? The vain illusion that a selfish being, who is more likely to destroy than to promote the interests of his creatures, may prove indulgent through partiality or favoritism. Where the prospect of immortality? No purpose or plan of God, no designs either of justice or mercy, require a future state for their accomplishment. Where are rewards and punishments? All are a mockery—at best the expressions of unjust lenity or unjust severity. Where is religion; where is virtue; where is the principle of recovery from the gulf of moral ruin; where is relief for the alarmed conscience; where is mercy, peace, hope, heaven; where is a perfect God? All is a blank. Indeed, a system of religion which denies THE GREAT RELATION OF GOD as the righteous moral governor of men, is all error, all delusion. It is worse than not true. It is most fearfully false. It is worse than nothing, worse than any thing. The God of such a system can be viewed in the light of truth only under two aspects—as the patron of iniquity, or an omnipotent tyrant. No God at all were better than the God of Infidelity. What man not already the hopeless victim of his wrath, would not wish that God were benevolent, though benevolence involves perfect justice. Under any other idea of him, there is nothing but that which in wanton malice patronizes iniquity with all its woes or tortures, nothing but that which is fitted to overwhelm with terror. Such then are the unavoidable results which reason gives from the premises of the infidel. If we can suppose him inconsistent enough to *believe* any thing better himself, he cannot *prove* it to be true, he cannot enforce it on the minds of other men by the authority of reason. He must give up his premises, and admit the great fact of A JUST GOD, or abandon all pretense to reasoning. His premises do not give his conclusions, but others which are opposite and appalling. What then can be hoped for, from a system of reason in which there is no reason? Will the world be reformed by a system of faith professedly founded in reason, and yet so obviously built on falsehood? Vain is the dream. Deism, with all the seeming comeliness of its most unexceptionable form, has, according

to its own principles, no warrant, no authority, from human reason. It is an utterly baseless system.

But I have another inquiry to make concerning this system: viz., WHAT IS IT? The deist—at least a few deists—professes to believe that there is a perfect God; that he is to be worshipped and served by piety and virtue; that he will forgive our sins on condition of repentance; and that good men will be rewarded and bad men punished in a future state.

This, so far as it goes, sounds well in words, but what does he believe concerning God? He tells us he is good. But what is goodness in God? We have seen that it is that sentimental tenderness, that indulgent lenity that sacrifices the general good to individual happiness; goodness that does not abhor the supreme evil, goodness that refuses to adopt the best means of the best end. Does the infidel then believe in God as he is? Does he conceive of him in the glory of that holiness which recoils from sin with supreme and eternal indignation, in the glory of that justice which will maintain his law, uphold his throne, sustain the interests of holiness, and express his supreme and immutable abhorrence of sin, though it involves the eternal destruction of a rebel universe? Who does not know, that all such exhibitions of God, are, in the view of infidels, repulsive, odious, intolerable falsehood? Who does not know, that they can tolerate no idea of God but that which exhibits him as more concerned for the happiness of his creatures than for their virtue; that view of God, which represents him as entirely dispensing with the eternal nature, relations, and dependences of things; and therefore as sacrificing the interests and the principles of righteousness to make his creation happy, by which he must inevitably make that creation wretched; that view of God which exhibits him in the glory of his mercy, sacrificing his justice, in the plenitude of his goodness as a tender, indulgent friend and patron of iniquity—a selfish malignant deity? Such is the good, the benevolent, the perfect God of Infidelity! I ask here, are these words merely, and *not things*? The same hollow emptiness, the same meaningless nothing, or rather the same fearful falsehood characterizes every part of the infidel's creed. What is sin? A venial evil—the merest trifle—nay, rather, so far as it exists, the best means of the best end! What greater practical error than to believe the worst kind of moral action to be the best kind of moral action?

Where is the true exhibition of the nature and tendency of sin against God, as hostility to him and all good and the source of absolute and universal woe; as the subversion of God's law, his government, his throne, his kingdom, as the destruction of all good—yea, of God himself, as the infallible source of misery, unmingled, complete, eternal. Are such the views of the true nature and tendency of sin which Infidelity gives us? Nothing like it. They are, of all things, the views which infidels most abhor. That sin is such an evil, involving such fell destruction, such guilt or ill-desert, and that a perfect God must feel and act toward it accordingly, is, in their estimation, the most incredible of all nonsense. These views of sin are the false, absurd, austere, gloomy, self-torturing views of hair-brained fanatics.

With such conceptions of God as the infidel entertains, what must that be which he calls *piety*? Can love, reverence, confidence, submission, gratitude, joy, be exercised toward the God of Infidelity? How preposterous. Can every thing be taken away from the character of God which awakens dread and disturbance when sinful beings think of heaven's Sovereign; can every moral attribute of the Godhead be amalgamated into one—that of unqualified tenderness; can all that is venerable and awful in God be sunk into that which is so grateful to the rebel; with such a view of God can the heart of his worshiper feel the holy reverence and awful love which are due to a perfect God? True piety, in all the sacredness and solemnity of devout emotion, adoring the tender, sentimental, weak-hearted God of Infidelity! When does the infidel contemplate God in his true character, that awful goodness which connects misery with sin, and welcome the aspect of such a God? When does he look upon that august and inviolable sanctuary, where the fires of his indignation forever burn to guard the approach of the least moral pollution, and adore, and love, and praise, with grateful and exulting joy? We all know that such a God is the object of aversion and ridicule, and even of blasphemy, with infidels. All their piety, all their joy in God, is, and can be, nothing but those selfish, sordid emotions which are founded in the belief that an unprincipled deity will be indulgent to them in their rebellion.

And further; what is that which the infidel calls *repentance*? Not sorrow for sin as it is—not as hostility to God, and the

frustration of his designs; not sorrow for sin, as that which in the estimation of God and of truth, deserves his wrath in the endless misery of the sinner. But rather, it is regret for a trivial evil, for that toward which God feels no supreme abhorrence, but which he on the whole prefers to its opposite—sorrow in a word, for that which in their estimation and in that of God, is the best means of the best end, with a determination to forsake it! And as to *future rewards*, what are these—what is the heaven of Infidelity? Nothing positive, nothing definite—a general undefined state of happiness irrespective of moral character. It may be the heaven of Mohammed, or it may be the blissful elysium of heathen poetry, or a paradise of earthly sweets in some other form. But it is not a world of happiness, because sin is not there, and because holiness is there reigning in all its purity and its joys. The happiness of the infidel's heaven is not that which is peculiar to holy spirits in communion with a holy God. It is any thing but a perfect God in fellowship with creatures bearing his perfect image. And what is *future punishment*? Not a supreme and endless misery inflicted as the expression of the wrath of God against sin; but at most paternal chastisement, disciplinary evil, kind inflictions to reform and to save; evil inflicted according to the exigency, so that they who are not reformed by less shall be reformed by more, so that rebellion itself, much as it may abhor the service of God, shall be compelled by dint of suffering to surrender to God's authority, and thus to serve him at best with a rebel heart. No other motive, nothing but the compulsory influence of natural evil is thought of or presented. Thus it is that Infidelity in its fairest form is plausible *in words only*. In respect to truth, it means nothing which it seems to mean. It knows nothing of God as he is—nothing of holiness or of sin, of piety, virtue, repentance, or of the nature of those influences by which alone moral beings can be governed and blessed. All it means under its fair show of words, is error the most destructive. And in further confirmation on this point, I appeal to any man acquainted with the writings or the character of infidels, and ask, is there a more palpable solecism than a pious infidel—a devout, spiritual, heavenly-minded infidel?

If now we appeal to Infidelity's code of morals, what is it? True morality is in the heart. Men talk of good morals. What are they? Benevolence in the heart; love to God and love to

man. Holiness, a spiritual principle, which as much surpasses all that infidels call morality as a living man does a dead man. In all the writings then of infidels, I fearlessly affirm, that the inculcation of the great, the true, the only principle of morality cannot be found. It follows of course, that whatever else may be true of their system, it includes not the slightest tendency to reform men in respect to morality. In most if not in all cases, there is an open and avowed contempt for many of the particular virtues which adorn the character of man as a social being, and which are essential to the happiness of an earthly community. At the same time the most heartless, sordid selfishness is inculcated in many forms, and many of the most degrading and destructive vices, with an almost unlimited indulgence of the sensual appetites, are countenanced and even formally vindicated. A few testimonies from the least exceptionable of deistical writers must suffice on this topic. Lord Herbert asserts that lust and anger are no more to be blamed than the thirst occasioned by the dropsy, or the drowsiness produced by lethargy. Mr. Hobbes, that the civil law is the only foundation of right and wrong—that every man has a right to all things, and may lawfully get them if he can. Lord Bolingbroke resolves all morality into self-love, meaning selfishness, and teaches that ambition, the lust of power, sensuality and avarice may be lawfully gratified if they can be *safely*, that man lives only in the present world, that the chief end of man is to gratify the appetites and inclinations of the flesh, that adultery is no violation of the law of nature, that polygamy is a part of this law, and modesty is inspired by prejudice or vanity. Mr. Hume maintained that self-denial and humility are not virtues, but are useless and mischievous, and that pride, self-valuation, &c., are objects of moral approbation, that adultery must be practiced if men would obtain all the advantages of life, and if practiced secretly and frequently would be no crime at all! But I need not go into further details. Substantially the same things or worse, are to be found in all this class of writers of most distinction.

If now we refer to their characters, we shall see that in their practice they gave proof of their faith. Lord Herbert, Hobbes, Lord Shaftsbury, Woolston, Tindal, Chubb, Lord Bolingbroke, Collins, were all guilty of the vilest hypocrisy and lying on the face of their publications; professing in words

high respect for Christianity, while they felt toward it the most deadly hate, wearing a mask of friendship that they might stab it to the heart. The morals of Rochester and Wharton were notoriously degraded. Woolston was a blasphemer; Blount was a suicide; Tindal and Morgan were shameless hypocrites. Voltaire was an adulterer, and as famous for falsehood, treachery, envy, profligacy, low sensuality and cruelty, as for his exalted talents. Rousseau, by his own published confession, was a thief, a liar, and a debauchee. Thomas Paine, than whom perhaps no one has done more by his writings to extend Infidelity in this country and in Europe, was infamous for his hostility to all morals and all religion, for his impiety, blasphemy, licentiousness and adultery, and sunk at last into all the filth and wretchedness of a sot; an object of pity and contempt to his own deluded disciples.

In presenting these examples, I do not pretend that every deist has been thus degraded by open vice and immorality. Doubtless there are cases in which pride, respect for character, literary ambition, and other causes have predominated over the grosser appetites; but in many of these an avowed hostility to the true principle of morals, a ridicule of the milder virtues, an extreme indifference and selfishness in respect to the best interests of man, have varied the aspect without lessening the guilt of their principles or their conduct. Nor let it here be said that some of the professed disciples of Christianity have also been depraved and wicked men. We admit it. But this we reply is notwithstanding Christianity—it is in spite of it, not its effect; while the wickedness and the profligacy of professed infidels are the genuine fruits and effects of their religion itself. The proof from facts is decisive. Such has been the character of *the teachers* of the one system almost without an exception, while the contrary character has been that of the teachers of the other, with almost no exception. In respect to *the disciples* of the two systems, in the one case a hundred to one have been openly wicked and profligate, in the other not one in a hundred has been.

Again; infidels themselves do not believe in the salutary, reforming tendency of their own system. What have they done, I do not say to propagate their faith, but to propagate it for practical, reforming purposes? what, to secure any useful practical influence on the human mind? Is it not notorious

that the grand, the supreme object, end, and aim of this class of men, has been to pull down and destroy Christianity, and to set up Infidelity in its stead? Is it not a fact that Infidelity, so far as it comprises truth *in words*, is a mere show, an empty pretense of truth, brought forward only as matter of display in argument; never as having any practical bearing on the conscience; never exhibited as a system embodying obligations, persuasives, motives—the least tendency or power to reclaim from sin and death—but used as an imposing semblance of truth—a foil to set off and commend the most destructive error. Does the infidel care what men believe, provided only that they do not believe Christianity? Or rather, so far as he teaches any thing positive, does he not inculcate false views of God, of his character, of his relations; and false views of man, his duty, his character, his prospects? Is it not a system to console rather than disturb human wickedness? Where are the truths brought forth *for practical purposes* which are taught by the light of nature itself? Where, in the writings or addresses of this class of men, is God presented to the human mind as he is—God in his holiness, his justice, or even in his mercy, for practical purposes; where do you find any exhibition of sin as it is, in its true moral deformity, turpitude, and odiousness; repentance in its ingenuous relentings, its godly contrition, brokenness of heart, and abhorrence of all sin; of the graces of humility, meekness, forgiveness, active beneficence, with the self-denial and self-government which they involve; where any exhibition of the rewards of the righteous and the punishments of the wicked pressed on the hopes and the fears of men as incentives to piety and virtue? Where is there any assault on corrupting error save that of Christianity, or any defence of truth, except that Christianity is false. Where is truth (I speak of truth taught by the light of nature), developed by illustration, defended and confirmed by argument, and pressed home on the bosoms and business of men in its practically reforming power; where are the sinful practices of men exposed and condemned; where are the corrupt principles of the human heart, its selfishness, deceitfulness, its lusts and inordinate passions, its worldliness, pride, and rebellion against God laid open; where is the law of God in its broad and spiritual demands unfolded; where is the full-length portrait of man drawn as a sinner against God without excuse, and without

hope save in the mercy of a just God—mercy without merit—mercy that can save while justice can destroy; where is the entreaty and the expostulation, the earnest solicitude, the beseeching tenderness, the faithful reproof, that true-hearted kindness that consults not the passions but the welfare of men, not their inclinations but their duties, that offends rather than deceives, that utters painful truth rather than flatters to destruction, that humbles, and rebukes, and wounds, rather than not save; where is the study, and the toil, and the prayers, the compassion, the tears, that become a reformer of fellow-beings ruined for eternity? Where are their Baxters, and Leightons, and Doddridges, their Edwardses, and Davieses? A death-like silence answers. There is not one Christian book that does not contain the essential elements of moral truth, illustrated, applied, enforced; you cannot find one infidel book that does. What signifies then all this pretense of infidels about reforming the world by the light of reason? If there is truth in their system, fitted and sufficient to reform and save their fellow-creatures from the doom of sin, and if they sincerely believe it, why not bring it forth for this high purpose, and go abroad on this errand of salvation with that apostolic zeal, self-denial, and devotedness, which become such a cause. Sin still maintains its dark and gloomy dominion, with scarcely an exception, throughout this wicked world, frowning resistance and defiance against God and goodness.

Why, as true men and good men, do they not open their powerful battery of truth, and make their artillery thunder on the strongholds of sin and death? Honest men, believing that they have the means of such a triumph, and yet doing nothing! Friends of God and of man, true-hearted philanthropists, do you believe that Infidelity will reform and save a lost world; then apply it to that purpose, show your faith by your works. In the name of truth and reason let us have the experiment. Oh, but Christianity is in the way. Then go where there is *no* Christianity. Christianity in the way? But Christianity, by their own confession, is the best, even a perfect system of morals. Why not then take TRUTH—TRUTH where they can find it—TRUTH, if the devil be the author of it; and carry it forth in its enlightening, transforming, and saving power, upon this dark and wicked and dying world? The infidel sincere! An apostle of Infidelity loving the souls of men; truly believing that a

lost world is to be reclaimed to God by deism; aiming to accomplish this end by this means! No. Every thing shows that his grand, his only object is, to destroy Christianity. He lives to annihilate its truths and to throw the reins loose on the neck of rebellion against God. He hates Christianity. He hates its author; he lives with the watchword on his lips, "Crush the wretch;" and to any labors, undertaken and pursued from principle, for the glory of God and the salvation of men, he will not make the least pretension. Labors for the conversion and salvation of men! There is not an infidel who would not be ashamed of, and even resent, the imputation.

Once more, what have been the actual effects of Infidelity, the practical results on the human mind. I speak of its effects where it has been most successful in respect to its real object of displacing the influence of Christianity and securing the prevalence and legitimate results of its own principles. Here I might appeal to the testimony of that multitude who have been converted from Infidelity to Christianity; what is their conversion in every instance by their own frank confession but a conversion from sin to holiness—what is it in most cases but a conversion from vice, profligacy, hostility to all that is good—what but a resurrection from moral degradation and death? Facts innumerable of this kind betray the camp of the enemy—they show us the interior of this sepulcher. But has Infidelity any such facts to show—facts of men made better by renouncing Christianity for Infidelity? Converts to Infidelity from among devout and enlightened disciples of Christianity, confessing their guilt for having embraced it, confessing vice and crime, profligacy and debauchery as the results of receiving and obeying Christianity! Baxters, Leightons, Doddridges, Brainerds, Edwardses, such men in the integrity of their hearts renouncing the corrupting influence of Christianity for the sanctifying power of Infidelity! All the world knows the absurdity, the self-contradiction, the utter impossibility of such a thing; and know as well that the difference between Christianity and Infidelity is the difference between truth and error—truth that blesses and saves, and error that curses and destroys the souls of men—the difference between life and death.

What has been the reforming influence of Infidelity, of human reason rejecting Christianity, or perverting it, or obscuring its

light? What was the cause of the decay and of an almost utter extinction of religion and virtue among men, from the seventh to the sixteenth century? The corruption of Christianity left the human mind to be governed by human reason and depraved morals, superstitions multiplied, heathenism revived under the garb of Christianity, spiritual tyranny was established, moral duties exchanged for vows, pilgrimages, austerities; God, his worship, his service forgotten; selfishness, vice, crime, a long, fearful night of woe. And what brought back the day? Was it Infidelity; was it human reason, unaided by revelation, or was it the book of God, reopened and republished by the reformers?

Take any period in this world's history and show when or where, in a solitary instance, Infidelity has ever raised the human mind from the gulf of ignorance and moral degradation; show where Infidelity first planted religion, or preserved it when planted, or revived it when it had declined, or purified it when it had been corrupted.\* Show the spot made bright and fruitful by its boasted irradiations of light. Where has it prevailed without producing darkness, sterility, and death? Need we speak of the actual experiment made in France not half a century ago? Need we refer to the corruption of all ranks of her people? Have we forgotten the goddess of reason, the temples of reason, the religion of reason, the abolition of the Sabbath, the proclamation of death as an eternal sleep, and God voted out of existence? Have we forgotten that the reign of reason was the reign of terror?

I only ask, on this part of our subject, what are the effects of Infidelity in the hour of death? This is the hour of truth and honesty. Now comes a grand catastrophe, and what is that religion worth which condemns, and deserts, and betrays the soul at last. And what is the testimony then of dying infidels? In whatever manner infidels die, the testimony furnished by their deaths, though circumstantially different, is, on the main fact, substantially the same. How many are their confessions, that Infidelity has been only the cause of profligacy, crime, and ruin? How many criminals have avowed that Infidelity is the cause of the crimes expiated by their ignominious deaths! How many have imprecated curses on the hour

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\* WILSON.

in which they first saw an infidel book, or on the murderer of souls, who put it into their hands! But who has heard a dying Christian, lament or curse the day in which he believed in his Saviour? How then does the infidel die? Does he die in obdurate insensibility? Often. But what a state of mind to meet death with! What is the question now in a moment to be decided? Whether his soul, with its stupendous powers is to be blasted into annihilation, expanded to the fruition of its God, or filled with endless despair and woe. And this soul, callous to its every interest, indifferent to its God, without a prayer for mercy, repelling every thought, suppressing every emotion that becomes a dying immortal—yes, a cherished, hardened insensibility, on the brink of eternity, and so soon to meet the God of eternity—asleep, for aught he knows or cares, on the brink of everlasting damnation!

Does the infidel die in the pride and presumption which ventures on the footing of his merits to challenge the justice of his God? Thus died Rousseau claiming the favor of his Maker, and affirming that he returned him his soul pure and immaculate as he had received it! What a lie—what daring of God to his face!

Does the infidel die in the careless levity of cold-hearted skepticism? Mr. Hume is our example. He amuses himself. He reads perhaps Don Quixotte, or the Tales of Genii. He laughs at death, joking about Charon and his boat, and the fabled Styx, and playing at his favorite game of whist. And on his death-bed finishes, what?—his Essay on Suicide, vindicating self-murder. Thus dies the applauded hero of Infidelity! Thus David Hume fell into the hands of the living God! What an unnatural contempt of death and of the tribunal of the final Judge! Was it all pretense, or was it the brand of God's reprobation?

Or does the infidel die in the anguish of despair? How numerous the examples—how agonizing their cries! How did Paine die? Under the compulsive power of conscience he declared, "That if the devil ever had had an agent on earth, he had been one." When his infidel friends said to him, "You have lived like a man," (lived like a man!) "and we hope you will die like one!" he said to one near him, "You see what miserable comforters I have." To the woman whom he had seduced from her husband, her friends, her religion, he

said, "The principles I have taught you will not bear you out." As death approached, he began to betray those terrors which before he laughed at. He would not be left alone night nor day, nor suffer his attendant to be out of his sight, and often for a long time together would exclaim in anguish, "O Lord, help me! O Christ, help me!"

Look now at the death of Voltaire. This prince of infidels is overwhelmed with terror! What does he think now of his infidel friends? "It is you," said he, "who have brought me to my present state—begone! I could have done without you all." What now does he think of that Saviour he had pronounced "a wretch?" Alternately he blasphemes God, and supplicates his mercy exclaiming, "O Christ, O Jesus Christ!" till his friends flew from his bedside horror-struck, declaring the sight too terrible to be borne.\*\*

I have no time, nor is there need for comment. I have only to ask, does philosophy, does human reason in that form of it called Infidelity, supersede the necessity of a revelation from God? What is Infidelity? In its fairest form, it is a theft on revelation, and yet refusing to wear the garb it has stolen, except to cover its own nakedness and shame! It has no support in its real form, not the shadow of warrant from reason, but is a manifest defiance and contempt of all reason. It has no truth, no principles. It obliterates all distinction between right and wrong, and subverts the moral dominion of God. It denies his true character; it proposes to give him neither honor, love nor service; it despises holy affections, spiritual enjoyments, heavenly anticipations, and gives up the whole man to the dominion of the lower appetites, and the sensuality of earth and time. It forgets all connection with eternity and the God of eternity. Of heaven as a home, of eternal happiness in fellowship with God, it has no hope. Of hell as the place of his retributive wrath it has no fears. In a word, Infidelity is a total disruption of the human mind from the only living and true God—a wretched device for the indulgence of the worst propensities of a fallen spirit. Will such a system reform the world, or must we look to one which has upon it the stamp, the seal of truth, of God, of heaven?

I need only state the third proposition, viz. :

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\* WILSON, Lect. XXII.

3. *That a divine revelation is necessary to the discovery of some important truths which man could not discover without it.*

The important truths here referred to, are the doctrine of the Trinity, and those doctrines which depend on it, as the doctrine of atonement made by the Son of God, and the renewing influence of the Spirit of God.

In conclusion, allow me, my young friends, affectionately to entreat you to avoid Infidelity. I have briefly shown you what it is. Can it be true? Can it be true that man, a creature of God, and formed in his image, is left to live, and act, and die, under a system of faith, so fatal to the high end of his creation, so dishonorable to his Father in heaven, so full of dark despair to the soul? Let the infidel in his scorn for truth, and in the miserable pride of exalting beyond measure the light of reason, shut his eyes on the glories of Christianity. Let him hold up his feeble, fading taper kindled by the light of the sun of revelation; let him pretend that it is his own, and try to extinguish the very luminary at which he lighted it. But be not deceived. Be not so lost to reason, to conscience, to the known end of your being, so lost to all experience, to truth, to God and all real good, as to listen to this empty declamation about human reason. Follow him not in his infatuated wanderings. What does reason teach? Reason employed on the nature of things, of God, of man, of all moral truth. Reason employed on facts given in all experience. What does reason thus employed teach? That Infidelity as it is, is false—that Christianity, whether a revelation or not, as a moral system *is true*. Who does not feel his blood chill at that vain pride, that love of error and of sin, that can reject the moral system of Christianity, and treat with scorn and sarcasm and objection, a system so full of hope and peace and joy to his own guilty spirit? Who does not know that if he embraces Infidelity as a practical system, that his soul is lost, ruined, without help even from its God? Who does not know that eternal truth binds such a soul in chains of everlasting darkness, guilt and woe! Who does not know that in so doing he is playing at the desperate game of daring not only Almighty God, but everlasting truth? That he forms a hell in his own bosom, that God cannot bless and save such a self-ruined immortal?

Yield then to reason. Obey the truth. Put on this pan-

opoly, even the whole armor of God. Now in the beginning of life, in this season of temptation—in this condition of danger from the frivolity, the thoughtlessness, the vanity of youthful companions, remember God your Creator in the days of your *youth*. Religion is always an ornament. In youth it is a finish and a crown—it gives a charm to every accomplishment, a luster to every excellence; and “rich are the tints of that beauty, and sweet the fragrance of those blossoms on which in the morning of life the Lord God sheds down the dews of his blessing.”

## LECTURE XIII.

**DIRECT ARGUMENT.**—Question proposed.—Preliminary remarks.—1. Question to be decided by human reason.—Limits of reason.—Perversion of reason.—2. Rational to believe in divine origin of Christianity on low evidence.—Relation of Christianity to our character and life.—Conclusions from this principle.—a. Unjust to demand high degree of evidence.—b. Shows the true cause of Infidelity.—c. The most promising method of convincing men of the truth.—d. The reasonableness of faith in unlearned men.—3. Common facts and principles must be assumed by all parties as premises of argument.—Illustrations.—How common premises may be fixed and agreed on.—Argument stated in four propositions.—First two have been previously proved.

THE inquiry now proposed is—

WHETHER THE SYSTEM OF RELIGION CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD?

Before however we enter into the investigation of this inquiry, there are some preliminary topics which deserve a brief consideration.

I remark then,

1. *That the question proposed must be decided on the authority of human reason.* Deistical writers have maintained that the belief of a divine revelation involves the renunciation of reason. This is a favorite topic with Bolingbroke, Voltaire, Hume, and many others. "Our most holy religion," says Mr. Hume, "is founded *on faith* not on reason; and it is a sure method of exposing it, to put it to such a trial as it is by no means fitted to endure." Well had it been for the cause of truth, had the professed friends of Christianity given no countenance to this sentiment. Every enlightened friend of revelation will and must disclaim it. Christianity on its own authority is a reasonable service, and its demand on all its disciples is, "Be ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh you *a reason* of the hope that is in you." Reason is our only guide in religion, in examining the evidences of a revelation, in ascertaining its import, in believing its doctrines, and in obeying its precepts. If there ever was a religion addressed to human reason, and insisting that its every claim be adjudged at this tribunal, that religion is Christianity. Reason and

truth can never war with each other. Reason is that high and noble power, whose sole prerogative it is to discover truth, to weigh the evidence of truth and to receive it, and it is not in the nature of the human mind, to believe either what it does *not* understand, or what when understood, it regards as irrational or absurd. We may indeed very rationally believe that there is *more* in a thing than we understand. We may believe a fact, the mode, the *how* of which we do not comprehend, but then the mode, *the how* is not the object of our faith. Concerning this, having no understanding, we have and can have no faith.

The true use of reason in matters of religion can easily be apprehended, if we would remember two things—one is, that man is not omniscient, and the other that he knows something. Not being omniscient, there are things which lie beyond the grasp of his intellect, which for aught he knows may be true or may be false, and in respect to such, while we have no evidence either of their truth or falsehood, reason forbids all faith. But if in respect to these things, evidence come to us, whether it be by extending our vision by a telescope, or whether it be by sufficient testimony of men who have seen what we have not seen, or by visitors to our planet from some other parts of the universe—or whether it be by God himself, or by messengers from God. I say, if we have legitimate evidence respecting things, which from the limitation of our knowledge we must admit may be true, then on the basis of such evidence, reason requires faith. To a well authenticated message from God on such matters, reason in the act of unconditional surrender, appears in its true dignity, its highest glory. Who that knows what God is, can refuse to listen to a message which he believes comes from him? True, if we could suppose a well authenticated message from God delivering known falsehood, then the case would be altered. We should have opposing decisive evidence, truth opposing truth, reason in her own absolute infallibility giving opposite results—reason reduced to a quandary from which with all its boasted prowess there would be no deliverance—reason that is no longer reason, but a name of worthlessness and contempt. But reason is now supposed to be in a condition in which it cannot be reason. The case supposed can never be, if there is such a thing as reason. The exercise of reason giving results, implies truth and the evidence

of truth. There cannot be the former without the latter. A well authenticated message from God can no more deliver known falsehood, than two and two can be five. If it does, it is not from God; if it is from God it gives infallible truth. Reason then having ascertained that God speaketh, must deem it its highest honor to bow to his declaration with implicit confidence. To oppose such a message with fancies and theories of our own devising, is an infamous violation of reason's prerogative, by exalting shameless ignorance to her throne—and as to being rational or philosophical, is as ridiculous as was ever schoolman with his quiddities, or a Cartesian with his whirlpools.

Further; while there are some things which fall without, there are others that fall within the limits of human knowledge and human judgment. The human mind can and must judge of the truth and falsehood of many things for itself, in entire independence of a revelation. And not only so, it can judge of truth and falsehood within given limits, and every item of its actual faith within these limits, shall be as truly rational as were man omniscient. The mind is made to *know* some things, and to *believe* some things. To refuse to confide *in faith*, or those judgments which are given by evidence, is to throw away and in effect to annihilate one part of the mind itself, that on which man is doomed to place reliance more extensively than on any other; and he who does it, if he does not thereby in fact become, must expect in all equity to be esteemed, an idiot. This part of the mind is made to be used, and its results are as truly and properly to be confided in, as those of intuition or demonstration. Man then to a great extent can judge of truth and falsehood, of possible and impossible things, of evidence, its kinds, its weight absolute and comparative—particularly, he can judge of the merit and demerit of testimony, as these depend on the character and circumstances of the witness, and on the subject matter of what he testifies. He can judge of and perceive the truth and falsehood of such credentials as the performance of a miracle or the fulfilment of a prophesy, he can judge of the signs of honesty and veracity, of dishonesty and imposture, of mental imbecility and strength, of credulity and incredulity, of soundness of mind, and fanatical or enthusiastic illusion and extravagance, as these are indicated in the manner, the style, the tone, the

countenance, the intellectual operations, the benevolent design, the uncompromising principle, the undaunted constancy of the witness. He can judge to a great extent of fitnesses and adaptations, of the tendencies of the great principles of action in men and in God; of what is right, what is wrong, of what man is made for, of what he is, and what he ought to be. He can see what God is, what he has done and has not done, what he is doing, what he will do and what he will not do. All this to a great extent reason can do, has a right and is bound to do. Otherwise it matters not as to the rationality of our faith, whether we are Mahomedans, Boodhists, Infidels, or Christians. If reason can make no distinctions, discover no differences, confide in no judgments, it were as rational to be one thing as another, to confide in malignity as in benevolence, to receive the illusions of Satan as the inspirations of the Holy Ghost.

Human reason too can judge of the subject matter of testimony, and this in every respect in which it is important to a sound and rational conclusion. It can decide in some cases what can be true, and what cannot be true; and it can decide when it cannot decide either, and can thus assign a limit to its own decisions. It can settle the important previous question, whether the subject matter of the testimony lies within its antecedent knowledge, or whether it does not. If it does not, but comes to us as information from a region which reason has not explored, and from its own limitations cannot explore, then reason can judge whether in its own nature it be credible or incredible. If incredible, it can and ought to reject it. If credible, it can then judge whether the allegation be sustained by evidence or not. If not thus sustained, then again it can and ought to reject it; if thus sustained, then why refuse to learn from one competent to instruct and entitled to confidence? Again, the subject matter may lie within our antecedent knowledge, and cases of this kind may be supposed to be very diverse. It may be one in which the knowledge communicated is insignificant and worthless in itself, or in which its communication from heaven would be unnecessary and useless because already fully possessed and acted upon, or one in which the knowledge though highly useful is not possessed at all, or only partially and imperfectly, or in which the knowledge is possessed but perverted, and needs to be presented in some new and more impressive form, or it may be one in which the knowl-

edge is attainable only, but not attained, and never will be, without such a mode of communication, or it may be one which shall be characterized by several of these facts. Of the subject matter, in all these respects human reason is competent to form the requisite judgment. On the contrary, the fact to be believed may be supposed to be utterly incredible in itself. For example, should the witness tell us that the planets do not revolve around the sun, that the sun itself does not shine, that the rivers do not run into the ocean, that the three angles of a triangle are not equal to two right angles, that a part is equal to the whole, or that man is a perfect being, loving God with all his heart, and his neighbor as himself, we should and we ought at once to confront him with our philosophical demonstrations, our daily experience and observation, our own intuition and consciousness. Thus human reason can judge, has a right, and is bound to judge of each and every thing respecting a revelation which has, or can have, any bearing on faith or no faith. Here is the prerogative, to sit in judgment on the credentials of heaven's ambassador, and on the message which he brings. When there is no evidence, let it have no faith. When there is evidence, let it judge according to evidence, and every item of its faith, whether in the form of assent or dissent, is as truly rational and trust-worthy as were its knowledge infinite.

But reason may be perverted. Yes, and that is our concern, and its consequences will be ours. Reason may be perverted; is reason then all our strength and all our reliance? Yes. But when I say this I mean REASON; not reason perverted. When I speak of and commend Christianity, I mean not a *corrupted, false Christianity*. When I speak of *man*, of his exaltation and dignity, of his noble powers, and the achievements of which he is capable, I mean not a corpse corrupted in its grave. Reason perverted is not reason, it is folly, madness. And because reason may be perverted, is it therefore not all our reliance and all our strength in the discovery of truth? Reason may be perverted, and therefore is not to be used! What then, *in the name of reason*, shall we use? Answer, in the name of reason, and not use your reason, if you can. Or answer with self-consistency, and say *our folly*, and you are welcome to the results. What nonsense to pretend to prove by reason that there is no reliance on reason!

2. It may be rational to believe in the divine origin of Christianity, on the supposition of a comparatively low degree of evidence of the fact. Those who reject Christianity have often insisted that a peculiarly high degree of evidence is requisite, to warrant faith in the divine origin of this system of religion. This claim is based on the principle, that a benevolent God in giving a religion to men, on the reception or rejection of which such tremendous consequences depend, would not fail to furnish such a degree of evidence as would infallibly secure human belief. To this I reply, that it either proceeds on the principle that faith can be compelled by evidence, to the entire exclusion of disbelief, or it does not. If it does, it rests on a false principle. The human mind can disbelieve, and has disbelieved, against the highest probable, and even against demonstrative evidence. Besides a compelled faith would be utterly inconsistent with moral responsibility on the part of man. What moral worth, what respect for God or confidence in his character would be involved in a faith which a man could not shun nor avoid. Nor is this all, it is in fact claiming that the whole system of Christianity shall be changed from a moral system to one of physical influence, and of course that it shall neither be right to receive nor wrong to reject it. The act of reception would be of physical necessity, not moral obedience. Is it then said, that the evidence might be so increased as to secure faith without compulsion? I answer, that any supposable increase of evidence, instead of securing faith, might prove the greatest calamity, since for aught that appears, men might still reject that evidence and thus greatly augment the guilt of unbelief. Suppose then, that when Christianity was introduced into the world, it had been written in the heavens above us in letters of light and fire so that all the dwellers on earth would read it, "CHRISTIANITY IS A REVELATION FROM GOD," this would have compelled the faith of men to the exclusion of disbelief, or it would not. If it would, then it would have been inconsistent with a moral system, and faith itself had been no virtue. If it would not, then like any other miracle, as that of the rending rocks, the opening graves, the rising dead, the quaking earth and darkened sun, it might have only aggravated the guilt of every unbeliever. We are therefore utterly incompetent to decide what would be the dictate of benevolence in the case. The proper question for us then, is not what a benevo-

lent God *would* do, but what it is rational for us to do, in view of what he has actually done. Or, to present the question which I now wish to examine, more precisely—is it rational on our part to believe in the divine origin of Christianity, on the supposition of a comparatively *low degree of evidence* of the fact?

The infidel then will not complain, if we impute to him the opinion, that the religion which he takes so much pains to destroy, is unfriendly, or at least unnecessary to human happiness. Nor, if he can make good this opinion, shall we have any controversy with him in respect to the reasonableness of his demand for a higher degree of evidence that this religion is from God. Such a religion would, in its very nature, furnish a strong presumption against its divine origin, and a very high degree of evidence be fairly required to counteract, if indeed any degree could counteract, such a presumption.

But if a religion demands our faith in its divine origin, and if to believe it divine, is obviously, and in every respect essential to our true and best interests, then the case is materially changed. It is a common mistake, that a man's interest ought to have no influence on his faith. There are cases in which it removes presumptive evidence to the contrary, and even becomes evidence of truth. Were one of you to be told that your father had disinherited you in his will, it would require more evidence to make you believe it, than if you were told that he had bequeathed to you your portion of his estate. True it undoubtedly is, that his interest should never lead him to believe without, or against evidence. But sound reason often dictates faith, and faith that shall be practical, in view of what may be termed comparatively very slight evidence. If in a particular case my interest *will not* be injured by believing—if it *may be* greatly injured by *not* believing, and if it *may be* essentially promoted by believing, then to believe on the ground of slight evidence, so far as to control action, is the dictate of sound reason.

That this principle of faith is the dictate of sound reason and common sense, may be shown by its universal application in all the affairs of human life. A scheme for the accumulation of wealth occurs to the merchant, which can result in no possible loss, which may produce large acquisition, and which, neglected, may involve him in ruin. A sick man *may* soon die, unless

some proposed remedy be used; the use of it can do no possible injury, but may restore him to health. Now what is the dictate of reason in respect to faith—that degree of faith which is necessary to action—however slight the evidence or probability, if it be real evidence, that a good result will be secured? Ought such evidence to be rejected or disregarded? Would that be sound reason? But in the case before us, we have interests at stake immeasurably more momentous. We are confessedly in the hands of an Almighty Being, and at his disposal forever. A system of religion, claiming to be from Him, is in our possession, and demands our faith in its divine origin, on the alternative of endless happiness or endless misery. To believe it to be divine, we will now suppose, can result in no real evil, but *may* result in immeasurable good; not to believe it to be divine *may* result in immeasurable evil. Who can rationally hesitate what to believe, be the balance of probability from other sources in support of the divine origin of this religion ever so small?

The case would be still stronger, if we were here to assume (what would be perfectly legitimate, in view of our former conclusions,) viz., that to yield to the practical influence of Christianity is indispensable to man's highest happiness in this world. Nor would it be too much to assume, as a point conceded by the most respectable infidel authors, that the practical tendency of Christianity is to perfect man in character and in happiness. If then we suppose that a man may conform his character substantially to this system of religion, without believing it to be divine, still it is undeniable that such a faith would secure to it a far higher and more perfect influence. I may go farther still. If we suppose there is no evidence to the fact of the divine origin of this religion, except that which arises from its perfect adaptation to man's moral perfection and consequent happiness, it were the highest, noblest act of reason to BELIEVE. And further still, on the supposition of this perfect adaptation to this high end, I say, if Christianity be a delusion, disturb not my faith in its divine origin. If falsehood is better than truth, then let us have falsehood. As a moral being, who has much to enjoy and to hope for in time, and who may live onward in the ages of eternity, I cannot dispense with the influence of such a faith, nor abandon its consolations and its prospects.

I might add did our limits allow, that on the supposition of a low degree of evidence for Christianity, while more proof might be useless and worse than useless, there may be great advantages in exactly that degree of evidence which God has furnished. Particularly, it may be one benignant part of that system of moral discipline by which our honesty and integrity of principle are to be tried and confirmed, by which men are to be made considerate, impartial, and attentive to every degree of evidence; to be kept from levity, and contempt, and ridicule, on a subject on which their eternal well-being, and that of a world, may depend.

If the principle of faith which I have now presented be rational, it shows the following things, viz.:

(1.) The injustice of the demand for any peculiarly high degree of evidence in favor of Christianity as the only legitimate ground of faith.

(2.) It shows the true cause of Infidelity in those who make this demand for higher evidence, viz., that they do not regard Christianity as adapted to promote their true and best interests, and that they do not like it as a system of religion. It involves, *in their view*, a derangement of their plans, and a thwarting of their inclinations. I am not now saying whether they are right or wrong in this opinion, but simply that such must be their opinion. For when was it known that a man disbelieved against even the slightest balance of probability, while he fully regarded it for his interest, in every respect, to believe?

(3.) It shows what, in many cases, is the most promising method of convincing men of the divine origin of Christianity, viz., to show them its adaptation to man's present and future well-being. If such be the real nature of this religion, its reception or rejection must depend greatly on its being seen and understood to be what it really is. As long as the thing itself is not understood, its rejection, if not rational, is not strange, but easily accounted for. Why should a man receive a system of religion of which he knows nothing, merely because some one tells him it is from heaven? Nay more; why should he even examine the question of its divine origin? He sees nothing in its nature or its adaptations that give any importance to the question, whether it come from heaven or not; nothing of course, to render it worth a demonstration. And if with this ignorance of the thing itself, we suppose the conviction to

be associated of its utter uselessness, and even of hostile tendency to good results, why should such a mind, with these views of the matter, care to know what the evidence of its divine origin is? By what asseverations of the divine origin of Mahomedanism could you induce the population of New England seriously to examine the question?

But now suppose a man to become well acquainted with the Bible, and to find that the book actually develops the most perfect system of means for the accomplishment of the most perfect conceivable end—a mighty scheme for a mighty purpose—a scheme and a purpose worthy of an infinite being, nothing less than a scheme or system of means to secure to a world of his intelligent and immortal creatures, perfection in character and perfection in happiness. Suppose him to see that the scheme is as simple as it is grand, as perfect in its adaptation as it is glorious in its end, as indispensable as it is useful—that it is so in the very nature of things, that it is and must be so from the very constitution of the human mind, and that the belief of it as divine has as direct a tendency to secure the result in the absolute perfection of every human being, as the belief of danger to produce alarm, or the prospect of good, the desire and pursuit of it. I ask, would not such a man be very apt to say, “I shall examine the evidence of the divine origin of this book, here is something worthy of such an origin, every presumption that it is the imposture of empirics, villains and enthusiasts is removed—it may be from God, it comports with his character, it is the very thing and the only thing fitted to accomplish the design of Him who made man, it is that, and exactly that which a benignant Creator would do for his own creatures—my highest, best immortal interest may depend on the question—I must see and know whether God has done this thing or not.” I am not now saying what the result of such an examination would be, but that without some just knowledge of what Christianity is, no man will examine the question of its divine origin, and with such knowledge, no man who has not become reckless of God, and of his own immortal nature and immortal interests will refuse to examine it. It may be from God, all it says of God *may be* true, all it says of the Saviour, of the miracles of his power and grace, of the scenes of immortality and retribution—all it says of those who believe *not may be* true. He who refuses with this tremendous perad-

venture in view, despises God, despises a soul, the next greatest thing to God, and that soul is his own.

(4.) It shows the reasonableness of faith in that great number of believers in Christianity, who do not and who cannot consistently with the other duties of life, become acquainted with but a small part of the evidence on the question. Of this class of men not one in a thousand has the leisure, or the talents, or the learning requisite to examine and weigh one-half of the evidence, especially what is called the external evidence. What qualification have the greater part of believers in Christianity to enter into the controversy with Hume or Voltaire? And have they therefore no reasonable faith? Have the common people no reason to believe the almanac because they are not astronomers—to believe that an eclipse will happen as foretold because they are incompetent to calculate an eclipse themselves? Have the same class of men no reason to believe that boats and locomotives are propelled by steam, because the philosopher has evidence that it must be so, which they have not? Plainly we may have sufficient evidence of truth without having all that which others possess. And in the present case, the author of the gospel may have intended that its great object and end and its perfect adaptation to that end, should be its chief evidence, especially to the great mass of mankind. Of this they may be perfectly competent judges. This, according to the laws of evidence, may be altogether sufficient to an honest, while more would be utterly insufficient to a dishonest mind, and while to neglect this, may be to neglect the very ground on which God has rested the proof, and required belief of by far the greater part of mankind. Accordingly, I hope to show that from the Bible alone, in the adaptation of its contents to man's perfection in character and happiness, a most conclusive argument may be derived that it is from God, one on the strength of which the unlettered peasant, ignorant as he is of all history, and destitute as he is of all learning, shall be more rational in his belief than Hume, Voltaire and Gibbon in their unbelief with all their scholarship.

(5.) If the principle of faith before stated be rational, it will enable us to form a juster estimate of the amount of the actual evidence, and to see how abundant and overwhelming it must be to a well balanced mind. Nothing is more remote from the truth than the supposed confession by the advocates of Chris-

tianity, that it rests its claim on a low degree of evidence. So far from it, there is scarcely any single question on which in their view evidence may be so accumulated. Witness "the piles of authorship," not merely as made up of repetitions, but of divers arguments resting on independent grounds, and drawn from distinct sources. Let the works of Butler, of Lardner, of Paley, of Wilson, of Erskine, of Gregory, and many other modern authors, tell how in the estimation of the friends of Christianity, its proofs have been augmented in later times and down to the present hour. It is not then to be *assumed*, that the claim for the divine origin of Christianity rests on any thing like a low degree of evidence. It is a question to be tried, a question not to be disposed of in favor of such a claim, till some hundredth or thousandth part of the evidence shall be examined and overthrown by those who make it. If any considerable part of the evidence offered and relied on is substantial, then indeed it is abundant and overwhelming. Nay more; there is evidence in every form, of every kind and degree which can be well imagined on the subject; evidence, in the language of another, fitted alike for "the high achievement of silencing Infidelity in the lofty and academic walks of life, as well as to carry Christianity into workshops and cottages." Christianity in the fullness of her strength, if one-half of what is claimed for her be true, has arguments for Jew and Gentile, for bond and free, for men of a false religion and men of no religion—arguments "by which she may confront the powers of literature, and compel the most arrogant of her disciples to do her homage, and those also by which her ministers from the pulpit may spread a well grounded faith amidst the multitude of the people."

I am not now saying that such evidence does in fact, but only that it is claimed to exist; and that on the true principle of rational faith, if only a considerable part of what is claimed, does exist and is substantial evidence, then it is abundant and even overwhelming, to an enlightened and well-balanced mind.

3. While it is essential to a fair argument on the question of a revelation from God, that the facts and principles which constitute the premises should be mutually understood and admitted by the parties, it is true that to a considerable extent they are not thus understood and admitted. These facts

are very numerous, and while some of them are understood and admitted by the parties, others are not, and others only in some general respects, but not in those on which the conclusion depends. I need not say, that it is to no purpose that the parties reason in such a case for the conviction of one another. In my own view, the fact that there has been so much of this mode of argumentation, is a principal reason that this controversy has not long since been terminated, so far as its continuance has depended on any show of argument. I say not whose fault it is. But so much is undeniable, that the premises of the argument, if any thing is accomplished by reasoning, must be understood and admitted by the parties. What is not understood must be explained, and if denied must be proved or abandoned. To see the bearing of these remarks let us take a case.

Suppose you have received a letter from another, having the signature of your father, and the question should arise, whether it is actually written by him. Now to take the question *ab initio*; if you have no father, the debate is ended before it can be really begun. If you have a father, then there is room for the question whether the letter be from him. Again, if you have a father, and yet there is some absolute impossibility that he should be the author of the letter, or of any letter whatever, this precludes all further debate; while if the possibility of his writing a letter be admitted, then the question in this respect is open for discussion. Again, let it be supposed that he is one of the wisest and most affectionate of parents, and that the letter, in respect to its contents, is wholly and even contemptibly useless and unnecessary, as advising you to eat and drink and breathe, if you would live; or suppose that without any sufficient cause or reason, and under pretexts known to be entirely groundless, it consists of threatenings to injure you—even to withdraw all support and kindness, and to cast you out as a disinherited exile; suppose that in one of these respects the contents of the letter are absolutely irreconcilable with the known character of the father, here again there is a strong presumption against the supposed authorship. Again, let it be supposed that the father is not only most judicious and affectionate, but a man of high literary and scientific acquisitions; that he is, above all things, intent to secure the scholarship of

his son, and peculiarly competent to aid him in attaining the highest literary eminence, and that the letter is written in subservience to this object; that it contains counsels, directions, inducements, and information, which are peculiarly fitted, and *even necessary*, to secure the end on which his heart is set; in a word, it is just such a letter as such a father in such circumstances would write to such a son, and you perceive some of the strongest reasons for believing that he actually wrote it. Again, as we suppose certain other things to be true or not to be true—the handwriting, the style, the manner, &c., &c., to be or not to be those of the father; or the letter to contain or not to contain allusions, implications, coincidences, statements of facts, of a certain character—these things, as they may be supposed to be or not to be, would have an important bearing on the question. Again; let it be supposed that the letter declares, that for the purpose of placing the authenticity of the letter itself beyond all reasonable doubt, that the father has done what in the case would be deemed a very singular and extraordinary thing—something which neither he nor any other man ever did before—something indeed, which if done would settle the question, but which, in your view of the case, *it is absolutely incredible that he should do*—so incredible, that no evidence, especially no testimony, can, in your view, when simply placed and balanced against its inherent incredibility, be esteemed sufficient proof that he has done it, and yet that the authenticity of the letter is made to depend on the fact that he has done this very thing. Here again is something which bears against the alleged source of the letter. But now again, in view of the high importance and even necessity of your believing it to be from your father, in order to accomplish its object, let us imagine what was not before supposed, that your father is fully apprised of some cause, some peculiar structure of your mind, some propensity or mode of thinking, that will prevent you from believing the letter to come from him without the supposed extraordinary marks of its authenticity; and that he knows, and that you and others know, if the object of the letter is to be attained, this is altogether the best way to attain it. Now, in view of the father's ardent and supreme desire to accomplish the object, there arises a strong presumption that he will adopt the very method, which, under another view of

the case, appeared so entirely incredible; for you now see a reason why he should do it, even one which renders it almost incredible that he should not.

Thus you see how, on the supposition of one kind of premises, the mind is led to one conclusion, and on the supposition of another kind, to the opposite conclusion, respecting the supposed origin of the letter. Just so it is in respect to the great question, whether God has given a revelation to man. The cases are entirely analogous. And the force of an argument for a divine revelation on each individual mind will depend on the views which that mind has of what God is, what his character is, what his relations to man are, what he has done, and what he has not done, what is and what is not his great end in man's creation, and what are his particular designs toward him; what he will do to accomplish his designs; what man is, what his character is, what his relations and his destiny are; and what the Bible is, what it is in its design, adaptation and tendency, and how it agrees or disagrees with the character of God and with his relations and designs toward man. It is only as we understand these things, that we are competent to make an argument on this subject, or to judge of one when it is made. It is only as the parties in this controversy understand and are agreed in these great facts and principles respecting God, and man, and the Bible, that they are prepared to enter on the discussion with any prospect or hope of advantage. How could any man be a competent judge of the question concerning the supposed letter, who knew nothing of the character, the designs, the relations of the father, nothing of the son, and nothing of the contents of the letter? You see then, that unless the parties in the present discussion are agreed in the premises, the discussion must be fruitless.

Now I readily admit, that in many of the facts which constitute the premises they are agreed, but I maintain that in many others they are not; and that so long as they are not, the argument for the divine origin of Christianity must prove ineffectual. I said they are agreed in some of the premises. They agree that there is a God of infinite natural perfection; that he is a being of a perfect moral character, or infinitely benevolent, disposed to secure the greatest amount of happiness which in the nature of things he can secure; they agree that he is the providential governor of the world, and, as the

omniscient author of all things, his providential will must extend to all actual beings and events; they may also agree that he is the moral governor of men, in some very general and indefinite sense. But in respect to the particular nature of the government which God exercises over this world, and therefore in respect to the precise method, way, or means by which God aims to secure the happiness of his creatures, whether it involves necessarily in the nature of things, a perfect moral government of free moral agents by law, with a strict adherence to all the peculiar principles and influences of such a system as the best means of the best end; and if it does, whether such a system does or does not in its own nature involve the existence of evil, natural and moral, and whether it does or does not in its own nature preclude the final termination of all evil—whether there is a future state, and whether we have any means of deciding what will be man's condition hereafter—what hopes and what fears he would be authorized to entertain from the light of nature,—whether man, without a revelation, would or could, on the basis of evidence, look forward with cheering anticipations to the future, or whether he would be compelled by the most decisive evidence only to forebode a fearful hour of retribution—on these, and many other main questions, the parties are not agreed. No one can have attentively read the controversy on both sides of this great question, without seeing that one of the parties reasons on one set of premises and principles, and the other party on another.

Were we to see an artificer employed in constructing a machine, though we were ignorant of its nature and its design, still, if we knew that he was neither deficient in power, skill, materials, or disposition to finish it, but was fixed and immutable in his resolution to give it ultimately, and as rapidly as the case allows, its highest perfection, we should have no doubt that the machine, whatever it might be, would be finished, and the end proposed accomplished.

Again; if now we suppose the purpose or end aimed at to be ascertained, this at least, in many cases, would give us the means which he would adopt, or was adopting, to accomplish his end. If his object was to propel a boat through the water, we should expect him, in these days, to make a steam-engine. If his object was to see what is to be seen in the moon, we

should expect him to make a telescope; or if it was to mark the divisions of time, we should expect him to make a watch or a clock.

Again, let us now suppose that the machine is so far advanced, that any competent judge can decide beyond all mistake, both what the machine is, and what is its object or end. Then also such a judge can decide with entire confidence in respect to many particular things *which will be done and which will not be done* by the artificer, in order to complete the machine and accomplish his end. Let it now be supposed that you and I are spectators of the progress of the work, and this particular question to arise between us and to engage us in fierce debate, viz., *whether the machine when finished will contain a main-spring or not?* And let us further suppose, that although there is in fact no reason to doubt on the point, that by some strange obliquity or imbecility of mind on the part of one of us, *we* are not agreed as to what the machine is, and you insist that the man is making a telescope, and I insist that he is making a watch. Now to what purpose shall we discuss the question concerning the main-spring, unless we can settle the preliminary question, whether the artificer is in fact making a watch or a telescope? And how can the debate be prolonged a moment with the least show of reason until this previous question is correctly decided?

Substantially like this, in my view, is the state of the controversy between the opposers and the advocates of a divine revelation. The former have such views of the character of God, of his object and end in the creation and government of this world, and especially of the means he has actually adopted to accomplish this end, that they can no more see a reason why God should give a revelation to men, and such a revelation as the Bible is supposed to contain, than why a skillful artificer should insert a main-spring or a pendulum in a telescope. Hence their constant asseveration—*it is utterly impossible*, or if obliged to qualify a little by being reminded of God's omnipotence, and of the manifestation of his direct agency in creation, still they affirm that considering the character and designs of God, and the object and nature of Christianity, it is irrational, even *utterly incredible*, that it should be the subject of a direct interposition from heaven.

The advocates of Christianity however *from their premises*

come to the directly opposite conclusion. With *their views* of the character of God, of his great object and end in the creation and government of this world of intelligent beings, and especially of the means or system which he has adopted for the accomplishment of this end, there is the same reason to conclude that God would give a revelation to the world, and the very revelation claimed, which there is for concluding that the supposed artificer in making a watch, would insert a main-spring to complete the instrument. Why should not God as well as man give completeness to the means of an end?

But here we come to another vital question, viz., *is man competent to say what God will do and what he will not do?* Is not the subject altogether too high for us? When we think what God is, of the eternity of his government, and of our distance from all direct and personal observation of him and the depth of his counsels, are not the form and mode of the management of his empire, wholly inaccessible to all our faculties? I answer, if this indeed be so, then let us cease all inquiry, for to what purpose is it to inquire or reason or form opinions where nothing can be known? If it is all darkness here, then it is as dark to the infidel as to the Christian, and if the Christian cannot say what God will do, the infidel cannot say what he will not do. We may be right or we may be wrong in our conclusions, and that is all that can be said of the matter. But is it credible that a benevolent God has doomed his dependent creatures—creatures who know that their all depends on what God will or will not do, to the darkness and agony of utter uncertainty. Can it be that the almighty and supreme disposer of all destiny has given us no intimation of his designs? True indeed it is, that man is incompetent to say in many respects what God will or will not do; but in other respects, and we may safely say in all which are important to man's well-being, man is competent to say what God will and what God will not do.

The great point here undoubtedly is to distinguish what we can know or prove, from that which we cannot know or prove. And what I maintain is, that we can do this to such an extent as to furnish the sure premises of irrefragable argumentation on the most momentous of all questions to man, viz., what must be his destiny and on what it depends? Nor should it be forgotten, that the argument must of course be confined exclusively to what we do know or can prove; and that we are

to place no reliance on what we do not know, ignorance being alike incompetent to make either an objection or an argument. The premises being conceded, all they involve and give, must be conceded also. If there is a benevolent God, then man can say, if such a God does any thing, what he does will be better than to do nothing. If he proposes an end, it will be the best end which he can accomplish. If he adopts the means of accomplishing an end, the means will be the best which he can adopt. If man can know what the best end is, as he most assuredly can, viz., the highest well-being of all, and if man can also ascertain what are the necessary and best means of accomplishing this end, then he can say that God will propose this end and adopt these means. If man can ascertain that a perfect God has actually adopted a given system of means for a given end, then can he say that system is the best. If man can know that any practicable thing is either essentially or circumstantially necessary to the perfection of this system of means, then also he can say God will do that. Thus knowledge gives knowledge, if we know one thing we know another—if we know what a triangle is, we may know its angles to be equal to two right angles—if we know that whiteness exists, we know also that there is something white. On the contrary, if that knowledge is wanting which is necessary to further knowledge, then of course such further knowledge will not exist. If I know that one has made a watch, then I know what a watch is; and knowing what a watch is, I know it has a main-spring—if it answers the purpose for which it is made, I know it must be wound up, and if I also know either that no one could, or that no one would do this but the maker, and know that it has been done, then I know that he has done it. But if I do not know any one of these things on which my knowledge of another thing depends, then I do not know the latter. In the same manner is our knowledge of God and of his doings more or less extended or limited. If we know or can prove certain things concerning God, then we can know and prove certain other things, and are as truly competent to say in such cases what God will do and what he will not do, as we are in like cases to say what a man will do, and what he will not do.

Nor can I dismiss the topic here. To maintain the doctrine of this necessary ignorance of God on the part of man, is not

only to provide a refuge from the power of truth, it is to subvert all reasoning respecting God and the relations subsisting between God and his creatures. Whether there be a God or not, whether he be omnipotent, wise and good or not, are things of no importance for man to know, and for this decisive reason, such knowledge gives no results. On this principle God might as well be without power, without intellect, without goodness—the idolater's god—a thing “which the smith fashioneth with tongs and with hammers,” or such as the prophet supposed who “peradventure sleepeth or is on a journey,” as a being of infinite perfection. If we cannot say what God will and will not do, then there would be as much ground for love, for confidence, for hope, for joy in one sort of deity as another, and to see omnipotent malignity or even blind chance on the throne of the universe, would be as sufficient a basis for exultation and joy, as to behold a perfect God reigning there; for whatever perfection be ascribed to him, there is no telling what he will do and what he will not do.

On the other hand, if we know that it were better or more desirable that there should be one sort of deity than another, and better simply and solely because by knowing what he is, we can know to some extent what he will do and what he will not do, then we also know that the doing of some things is better than the doing of some other things. And knowing these things we know yet more. We know that a perfect God seeing the end from the beginning, and being immutable in his purposes, will accomplish his plans, and carry them on and out with all possible perfection to their results. And when the plan or system of things is actually adopted and developed to our inspection in its essential characteristics, we can tell what it is and what it is not. We can decide whether it is a system of mere physical agents, whether God reigns merely over material forms and animal life and sensation, and is the spectator only of the laws of matter and the acts of instinct, or whether he has adopted a moral system, and reigns over it according to the principles and laws of such a jurisdiction.

The argument for a divine revelation materially depends on the fact that God is administering a perfect moral government over man.

The proposition to be proved from this source is, THAT THE SYSTEM OF RELIGION CONTAINED IN THE BIBLE IS FROM GOD.

The argument divides itself into the following propositions:

I. God administers a perfect moral government over men.

II. By the administration of this government, God proposes or decrees to reform and bless a great multitude of our race.

III. The importance and necessity of a revelation to the accomplishment of this end, create a strong probability or a moral certainty that God would give a revelation to men.

IV. That which is claimed to be a revelation from God, and which is contained in the Bible, is what it claims to be.

The first two of these propositions have been sufficiently discussed in preceding lectures. We need only consider the two which remain.

## LECTURE XIV.

**DIRECT ARGUMENT** continued.—Two remaining propositions considered.—Prop. 3. The importance of revelation renders it probable, if not certain, that God would give a revelation.—Opposed by some.—Their views discussed.—Man not competent to decide on the manner, &c., of revelation. Recapitulation of argument on necessity of revelation.—Prop. 4. That which claims to be a revelation, is what it claims to be.—Conclusion.

OUR third leading position is the following, viz.: *The importance and necessity of a revelation to the accomplishment of the great end of God in the creation and government of this world, furnish a strong probability, not to say a moral certainty, that God would give a revelation to men.*

In the present lecture I propose to establish this position, and also briefly the fourth, viz.:

IV. *That which is claimed to be a revelation from God, and which is contained in the Bible, is what it claims to be.*

I proceed then to establish the third leading position, viz.:

III. *The importance and necessity of a revelation to the accomplishment of the end of God in the creation and government of this world, furnish a strong probability, not to say a moral certainty, that God would give a revelation to men.*

This position has to encounter a strong prejudice, which I have already had occasion to notice in another connection. Among the advocates of revelation, there are those who would rely wholly on what is called *the external evidence* of Christianity. They tell us "that we are utterly unable to say what God will do, and what he will not do; that the subject is altogether too high for us; that we have had experience of what man will do in given circumstances, but we have had no experience of what God will do in given circumstances; and that to pretend to determine what God will do, or what he will not do, in any given circumstances, is an act of glaring rebellion against the authority of the Baconian philosophy." That none of those

defenders of Christianity, who have relied on the internal evidence, have violated the true principles of reasoning, I am not concerned to show. Be this as it may, the above opinion, in the broad and unqualified form of statement in which it is presented, is utterly incredible, as well as destitute of the least claim to the true mode of philosophizing. For to what purpose is it to inquire, or reason, or form opinions at all concerning the acts and the doings of God, if nothing can be known or concluded on the subject? What matter is it who or what God is, if from our knowledge of what He is, we can in no respect infer what he will do and what he will not do? Why is it that these men, who so zealously contend for an exclusive reliance on the external evidence of Christianity, are so suspicious of all attempts to decide what God will do and will not do? Do they themselves not believe that a perfect God, if he professes to give a revelation to man, will speak truth in that revelation? Do they not believe that a perfect God will not work miracles in attestation of falsehood? And is not this inferring and believing what God will do and will not do, in given circumstances? At least in two respects then, let them qualify their broad and sweeping position.

Besides, are these two the only respects in which we are competent to say what God will do and what he will not do? If there are no other acts or doings which we can surely and safely affirm that a perfect God will perform, how can we ever prove that there is a perfect God? And if we cannot prove this by his acts and his doings, and this on the principle that a perfect God will do some things and will not do other things, then how can we know that he is a perfect God, or, if he gives a professed revelation, that he will speak truth; or if he works miracles, that he does not work them in attestation of falsehood? The plain matter of fact is, that there are two modes of reasoning in respect to intelligent voluntary beings, which are alike founded in experience, and accord with the Baconian philosophy. Thus, in certain cases, experience fully authorizes us to reason from the acts of voluntary beings to their character, their principles, their designs, and to determine what these are. In other cases, having ascertained the latter from their acts and doings in some respects, experience fully authorizes us to reason from these to their acts and their doings in other respects, and to determine what these will be and will not be.

If I know that an artificer has begun to make a watch, with adequate power and skill to finish and give it the highest perfection, and if I know him to possess an unflinching firmness of purpose, I may infer that he will perfect what he has begun, as particularly, that he will insert a main-spring in the watch. And further, if I know that he is fully resolved to secure in the most perfect degree possible to him the true use of the watch; and if I know that he is making, or has actually made it for the use of another, who will never understand its true use unless the maker instructs him, then I may infer that he will give this instruction; and if the requisite instruction respecting the true use of the watch should be liable to, or should be foreseen to be actually connected with some incidental evil, still it is quite supposable, that the maker should evince, in the most decisive manner, an inflexible purpose to give not only the highest perfection to the watch, but to every thing which can be regarded as the means of its perfection; so that if the end fails in any degree to be accomplished, it shall be seen that the failure is in no respect truly and properly attributable to any thing which he has done or failed to do. That such premises give such conclusions respecting man is obvious; they can do no less in respect to God, when it is remembered that he is a Being absolutely and immutably perfect.

If then we can know or prove certain things concerning God, then we can know and prove certain other things concerning him, and are, in view of the immutability of his purposes, more competent to say what God will do and what he will not do in given circumstances, than we are to decide the same things in respect to man. If we can know or prove what the best end of creation is, as we most assuredly can—viz., the highest well-being of all—and if we can also ascertain what are the necessary and best means of accomplishing this end, then we can say that a perfect God will propose this end and adopt these means of accomplishing it. And further, if we can know or prove that any practicable thing is either essentially or circumstantially necessary to the perfection of this system of means, or to secure the end in the most perfect degree possible to him, then we can infer, that notwithstanding any incidental evils, he will give perfection to this system of means. It is not true, then—it is indeed utterly incredible, that a benevolent God has doomed his moral creation, even

under the light of nature, to the darkness and agony of utter uncertainty in respect to what he will do and what he will not do. The supposition, as it would be easy to show, subverts all natural and all revealed theology.

But here let me not be misunderstood. I am not saying, if we were to assume simply that God is benevolent, that we could, with no knowledge of his doings, make the same sure inferences which we can now make. I readily concede also, that man in his actual condition is wholly incompetent to say, *in many respects, or in respect to many things*, what God will do and what he will not do. The great point is to distinguish what man, in his actual condition, can know or prove, from what he cannot know or prove, respecting the doings of God. The presumption that fearlessly ventures to dogmatize its decisions in the dark, and the timidity that rejects truth in the broad daylight of evidence, are alike reprehensible.

To come then to the particular inquiry before us, can we distinguish what cannot be known or proved from what can be known or proved in respect to God's giving a revelation to this world? What I maintain is, that we can do this to such an extent as to decide with entire confidence *that God would give a revelation to man*; and from this fact, and in view of the nature, the adaptations and actual results of that system of religion which is contained in the Scriptures, we must conclude *that Christianity is a revelation from God*.

To prevent misapprehension then, and the confounding of one thing with another, I would here explicitly concede that we may be wholly incompetent to say *in what manner* God would give a revelation to man, or *at what time*, or *to what extent*. In these respects we may be unable through the want of all requisite premises to form any conclusion. More particularly in regard *to the time* when God would do this, I would say, that under the mere light of nature, we might be ignorant whether the revelation would be made in this or a future state. Human reason might be utterly incompetent to judge whether man's probation would not continue after death, and whether further discoveries of religious and moral truth would not be deferred to some indefinite period of man's future existence. In regard to the manner, we may be incompetent to determine whether it will be orally or by writing, by the ministry of men or of some superior agents, or even by a direct com-

munication from himself. In regard to *the extent*, we may be unable to say, whether he will give it to all men of all ages and nations, or only to a part of the race. Still we can say that he will give it to such an extent, as shall be sufficient to prevent the utter defeat and frustration of his design in adopting the system. If he does not give a revelation to *some extent*, this design will *wholly* fail. We must conclude therefore that he will give a revelation to *some extent*, and to that degree which will best subserve his benevolent end, though we cannot determine what that extent is. In maintaining therefore that there is proof from the light of nature, *that God would give to men a revelation*, I affirm nothing in respect to *the time*, *the manner*, or *the extent* of such a revelation beyond what has now been stated. On these topics I do not pretend that we have the requisite premises for any conclusion. It is obvious however, that we may still have abundant proof of the fact, that God would give a revelation. We may have sufficient premises for one conclusion, though we have none for another. To recur to the example, we may have decisive proof that a watch-maker will complete the watch he has begun, and that he will give the requisite instructions concerning its true object, to him for whose use he makes it, and yet we may possess no means of deciding *when*, *in what manner*, and *to what extent* he will do the latter. While in respect to these particular points of inquiry, all may be left indeterminate and uncertain; still the fact that he has begun to make the watch, that he has proceeded so far in the work, surmounting all obstacles, and showing in every conceivable way that he is fully intent on the accomplishment of his design, that nothing can come into competition with it, nor hinder him from doing all that is necessary to give entire perfection to every thing fitted to secure the end aimed at; the fact ascertained by the most abundant and decisive experience, that he for whose use he makes the watch, will never so understand it as to secure the end without instructions from the maker—these things being known, render the conclusion unavoidable, that the requisite instructions concerning the use of the watch will be given. We have all the reasons for this conclusion which are or can be well conceived of, in respect to the acts and doings of voluntary beings in any case whatever. There is according to the supposition, no possible ground of doubt in respect to the ulti-

mate end of the watch-maker, nor in respect to his purpose to give the highest possible perfection to the means of accomplishing it, nor the necessity of instructions in the use of the watch to the perfection of these means. Who then can doubt in regard to the fact that such information will be given?

Such is the argument by which we prove from the light of nature that God would give a revelation to men. To present the argument, we now recur to what we have attempted to prove in the preceding course of lectures.

We have seen that man from the nature of his constitution and the condition in which he is placed, is a moral being—that conformity to the law of benevolent action is the true and only means of his perfection in character and in happiness. We have seen that God, his Maker, administers a perfect moral government over this world, through an economy of grace; that in this system he aims at the great, the best conceivable end by the best conceivable means, or that this system of means is in every conceivable respect perfectly adapted to the best conceivable end—that God has proposed the highest happiness of his moral creation which he can secure as the end of his government; that he gives to the system of government which is the means of this end every conceivable perfection—that to this end and the perfection of this system of means every thing else in his whole course of providence—all that can be called good, is subservient, and every thing that is evil, if it can be made to contribute to this end, is used for this purpose—that every evil which to him is incidental to the system and unavoidable in the nature of things, if the system be adopted, is incurred, or to speak in the language of theology, is purposed or decreed rather than not adopt and carry out the system. We have seen, that in administering his moral government under a gracious economy, God manifests himself *as a just God* and yet a Saviour—that in this way he evinces the fact of an atonement, though not the matter and method of it, thus manifesting the immutability of his purpose, not only to accomplish the end of the system adopted, but to give the system itself the highest perfection in respect to fitness and adaptation to its end, so that instead of spreading the gloom of despair over this world of sin and guilt, he authorizes the belief of a future state, in which the order, beauty and splendor of his moral administration will be completed in the blessed-

ness of the righteous, and in the merited punishment of the incorrigibly wicked—results, which in the comparative amount of happiness and misery, will fully accord with the benignity and grace manifest in the system of means adopted for their accomplishment.

Such then is the great, the comprehensive design of God in the creation and government of this world, as presented to us by the light of nature. Reason duly employed on the subject gives us the whole and every part of it. It gives us not only the end, viz., the highest perfection of his moral creation, in character and in happiness, possible to the Creator, but also the perfection of the system of means, both in every essential respect as a system of moral government under grace, and in every circumstantial respect as involving all that can be conceived to be necessary to prevent the failure of the end, and to secure its most perfect accomplishment.

I now ask, what will become of this great plan of God the Creator? Will his design in creating men moral beings—beings the most exalted in kind which he can create, be abandoned through indifference or fickleness? Will the great object of all his works—that to which every thing beside is subordinate and subservient—be relinquished as impracticable by an Omniscient and Almighty Creator? Will it prove in the issue to be a design, for entering upon which, he who sees the end from the beginning, will see that there were no reasons, or for abandoning which he will discover new reasons? Will that design of God, in forming beings in his own image, which stands forth first, brightest, greatest of them all, terminate in utter failure and defeat? Will the progress of this plan of God come to a sudden end—the moral constitution of his creatures, this whole moral system, be divested of all significance, and its author of all his wisdom and honor, and all that can deter from iniquity and secure the moral perfection of moral beings; all that can bless man, exalt God; all that can make heaven rejoice and hell tremble, be frittered away into an insignificant and degrading mockery? If the immutability of God, the infinite perfections of his Godhead—if the clear manifestation of designs worthy of himself—if their superior excellence as stamping all others with insignificance, and if their ceaseless development and unflinching progress for six thousand years, give any security in respect to what God will do, then must

we look for a full and perfect consummation of God's great design as the moral governor of men.

I now advert to another position, which I persuade myself has been fully established in preceding lectures, viz., *the necessity of a revelation from God.*

I attempted to show that there is a necessity of such revelation, in three respects :

First. To give the highest conceivable perfection to the mode of discovering truth to the human mind.

Secondly. To any extensive and useful discovery of truth to the mind.

Thirdly. To the discovery of some important truths, which the human mind could not discover without a revelation.

The question now is, whether, in view of this necessity of a revelation as existing in these respects, we have reason to conclude that God would give a revelation to man. I proceed then to show—

First, that the necessity of a revelation to give the highest conceivable perfection *to the mode* of discovering truth to the human mind, supposing it to be necessary for no other purpose, furnishes decisive proof that God would give a revelation to men. The argument here rests on two facts which have already been established, viz., that a revelation is necessary to the highest conceivable perfection *in the mode* of discovering truth to the human mind; and that God has actually evinced his design to give perfection to that system which he has adopted to reclaim and save this lost world. That a revelation is necessary to the highest perfection of a reclaiming system, so far as perfection in adaptation, fitness, and tendency to secure the end of such a system is concerned, no one will deny. Nor can I imagine any possible ground for doubt on the question, whether God, for this reason, would give a revelation to men, except one, viz.: the possibility that through perversion on their part, it might prove for the worse instead of for the better—become a curse instead of a blessing. To this I answer, that admitting this possibility, it furnishes *no proof* that it would *in fact* prove to be for the worse, nor that God would not give a revelation. I answer again, that the whole history of his providence, as I have abundantly shown, evinces a fixed purpose to give perfection to his system of moral government under a gracious economy, or to his system of reclaiming influence

irrespectively of its foreseen perversion on the part of his subjects. This foreseen fact of perversion in its (almost) absolute universality, has not prevented him from giving to the system every *essential* perfection, nor from giving it every *circumstantial* perfection, to such an extent as to remove all presumption against the fact; while what he has done furnishes the highest probability of the fact that he will, sooner or later, add that of a revelation. Without supposing that God designs actually to reclaim and save one of the human race, I maintain that one design of God is too conspicuous in his providence toward this world to be denied or doubted, viz., his design to give absolute perfection to his system of reclaiming influences. The fact that he has done so much for this purpose already, in an economy of grace, bringing every conceivable influence in the universe to bear on this great object, and doing every conceivable thing to accomplish it except that of giving a revelation, is as truly decisive of his design to give perfection to this system as had he done more. Whatever may be supposed to be the reason for giving such perfection to this system as he has actually given—whether he proposes to reclaim some of our guilty race or not, or whether we can or cannot assign any reason for this perfection of the reclaiming system, or whether we can or cannot say why he has not already added a revelation, supposing that he has not, one thing is decisively proved, viz., that he chooses to give it the highest conceivable perfection. Take the case of the watch-maker. Suppose the work has progressed to a certain point—that he has done every thing but one which is necessary for accomplishing the end proposed; he has finished a perfect watch, he has put the parts together, has inserted the main-spring, oiled the machinery, wound it up, placed it in the hands of a son for whose use he made it; he has done all this at no ordinary expense of time and labor, and with no ordinary degree of self-sacrifice; in a word, he has thus done all that can be conceived to be adapted and fitted to secure the end, except he has not told the possessor of the watch how to wind it up. And now, with all these proofs of his real design, do you, can you believe that he will never explain that to him? Suppose you cannot tell the results of giving this instruction—whether it will prove for better or for worse; suppose you can give no reason for delaying to give it for a few minutes or a few hours, can you therefore believe that

the requisite instruction by the watch-maker on this material point will never be given? This, with any fair-minded man, could not be a matter of hesitation or doubt. So in respect to the reclaiming system of God. In view of what he has actually done toward giving it perfection as a system of adaptations and fitnesses, there is decisive reason for believing that he will give it absolute perfection; and in view of the necessity of a revelation to this, there is all the reason for believing that he would give a revelation, which there is for believing that he would perfect the system. And there is all the reason to believe that he will perfect the system, which the actual perfection of it in all respects but one can furnish. Having done all things necessary to its perfection but one, is there not a moral certainty that he will do that also? Having done so much, he has furnished, so far as this kind of evidence is concerned, all that is possible in the case, more being impossible without giving a revelation. If too we reflect on what God actually does to give perfection to this system, how the object stands forth the first and the highest, and as it were the whole and sole object of nature, of providence, and of grace; how all things are subordinated to this; how all influences from himself, his character, his relations, his friendship and favor, his displeasure and his wrath—every influence from man himself, every influence from earth and heaven, from time and eternity, is brought to subserve this design, who can doubt that, sooner or later, the Being with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, will give to such a system perfection absolute? The probability is the highest of which the nature of the case admits. If the acts and doings of God can prove any thing, they show that he would give a revelation to men.

It is easy to account for what he has done, on the supposition that he intends to do more; but it is not possible to account for what he has done, unless you suppose that he intends to do more.

God, by perfecting the system, would give *higher* proof that he preferred holiness to sin, than he would or could give. There is no reason for concluding that he will not perfect the system: there is therefore all the reason for concluding that he will perfect it, that the above consideration affords.

I proceed to show—

Secondly. That the necessity of a divine revelation to secure

to any extent any useful practical knowledge of religious and moral truth to man, in connection with other facts, furnishes further proof that God would give a revelation to man. Let us look at the facts as already established. God, as we have seen, has, as the Creator and Governor of this world, proposed the best conceivable end, and has also adopted the best system of means for its accomplishment, with the single exception that it does not include a revelation. This great end is the highest happiness of his creation; the system of means is a perfect moral government under an economy of grace. This end will fail, and this system of means will be in vain, and worse than in vain, without a revelation. If facts—if the experience of a world for thousands of years can prove any thing, it has proved, that without a revelation from God, all the generations of men will live and die in sin. At the same time, the nature, the immutable principles of God's perfect moral government, give another and still more appalling result—the complete and eternal misery of all these creatures of God. The great, the awful experiment has been made in respect to what man as a subject of God's moral dominion, will do without a revelation. It has proved that he will sin, and only sin. The throne of God, though a throne of grace, stands on the pillars of eternal justice, proffering no pardon, giving no hope to impenitent transgressors, but frowning in terrific majesty, and dooming a world of such transgressors to just and fearful retribution. The alternative is, either the failure of God's great end in creation, even the moral perfection and consequent perfect happiness, of every moral being, involving, as it must, the utter and endless misery of all, or the gift of a revelation from God to this lost world.

I maintain the high probability of the latter. To estimate this aright, we must recur to all those providential dealings of God to restore man to virtue and to happiness, which so clearly and so impressively disclose his design as a moral governor. If it be said, all this may be without a providential purpose actually to restore any; I admit the bare possibility of it, but this is not evidence, it is only probability. How then is this probability to be estimated? Is there even the slightest presumption that God would give existence to such a world, to such myriads of immortal beings, with the foresight, and therefore with the providential purpose that each and all should be

miserable forever? Every presumption is against it. The merest surmise of such a fact without evidence, is unauthorized and injurious, and proscribed by every principle of just reasoning. The entire want of evidence of such a fact, in view of his perfect benevolence, is proof against it. Indeed as we have already shown, there is the most satisfactory proof, that the Creator will secure such results in the holiness and happiness of this part of his moral creation, as will furnish bright displays of his infinite goodness. Nay more. We have seen in that economy of grace and mercy which he has clearly disclosed in all the ways of his providence, the sure pledge of results, in the holiness and happiness of men corresponding with its benignity and grace. Who are the objects of all this grace? The creatures of his power, the children of his love! Will God then adopt such a system of means to reclaim and save, giving it every conceivable adaptation and tendency to such an end—will he bring all creation and providence to attest his sincerity, and his overflowing kindness toward his disobedient children, without a design actually to reclaim and save, and with the knowledge and the purpose that the only result shall be the aggravation of the guilt and the ruin of all? Reflect and see what benignity and grace assail a thoughtless, wicked world at every step of life! What solicitude and earnestness to reclaim his wayward children, which none but a perfect God could feel or manifest! What riches of long-suffering and forbearance—(what evil that is not the infliction of paternal love)—what goodness leading to repentance and drawing with the cords of love and with the bands of a man—what yearnings of compassion, what bowels of mercy—what a length, breadth, height, depth in God's restoring love! And do such love and mercy thus seek their objects with the foresight that it will, and the purpose that it shall augment the guilt and ruin of them all? Is such the errand on which this mercy of God comes to this ruined world? Oh no. It is the breaking, the bursting forth of the heart of infinite love in acts of sincerest mercy actually to reclaim and save all that can be saved! It is the mercy of God, doing for each, and for all, and at every moment, all that can be wisely done. It is the decree of God unchangeable, actually to reclaim and save a multitude which no man can number, out from all nations, and kindreds, and people and tongues—a decree of God unchangeable, to bring home to himself bright

hosts of holy, happy immortals, to satisfy, and bless, and rejoice that heart which sought their salvation! But without a revelation all will be lost—this design of mercy will fail! Surely that mercy will not withhold from the guilty beings it decrees to save, the revelation they need. No act of paternal kindness—no gift of a father's love is so sure, as that of revelation from its God to this lost world.

Once more—

Thirdly: The necessity of a revelation to the discovery of some important truths which man *could not* discover without it, proves that God would give a revelation. I have already taken occasion to show how utterly hopeless would have been the condition of this sinful world, without the discovery which the Scriptures make to us concerning the manner in which its redemption is achieved—in other words the revelation of the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in their respective relations to the work of man's redemption from sin. The two great problems are, *how shall the perverseness of rebels be subdued to love; and if subdued, how can a just God receive them to favor?* Here all is mystery unsolvable, darkness impenetrable and appalling! How could human reason alone and unaided have discovered the mystery of redemption? Even when God has revealed it, reason is lost in this abyss of love and mercy, and needs all its submission to believe! Man, sinful as he is, I admit, *might* repent and *might* hope for mercy from his Maker. But would he? What bondage so strong as bondage to sin—what death so hopeless as death in sin? Who shall deliver? What power shall give life, and health, and beauty immortal to these victims of sin and death? I said man *might* hope for mercy. But with a just apprehension of God's fearful justice and his own desert of its fearful doom—looking upon a sin-avenging God as he must, and asking *how* can such a God show the same abhorrence of sin and yet forgive, as he would by turning a rebellious world into hell, then it is that the terrors of God come over us; hope trembles and expires. Not that it must be so, but it always has been and always will be, with exceptions that need not be mentioned. It is not hope in a God all tenderness which we need. It is that which looks upon a just God, and with a sense of his righteous indignation toward sin, reposes calmly and sweetly in his mercy. But there is so much terror here, so much darkness and tem-

pest around the throne of God, that in the eye of guilt, the rays of mercy fade and will not suffice. Guilt will look up with confidence, only when it sees the throne of God upheld by "the man that is his fellow." Take away "the incarnate mystery," extinguish the light that reveals the great atonement of Christianity, and where is hope for human guilt? Zeno, Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Epicurus, Porch, Academy, Lyceum, Infidelity, Deism, Philosophy, Human Reason, all, what can ye do, what can ye substitute for the blood of the Son of God? Extinguish that light which reveals the mercy of God through his Son, and let in the terrors of guilt and of God on this sinful world, and how would each and all, in the gloom or frenzy of despair, take their way down to everlasting burnings? Will a redeeming God then withhold that light from the world he would redeem? Will he abandon every purpose of mercy—render every other manifestation of it vain, and worse than in vain; will he give up his lost creature to the perdition of hell, when he has, for the light of nature teaches it, actually made an atonement? Will he do this by concealing from their view what that atonement is? Has he made, and given abundant proof that he has made the only atonement, by the knowledge of which conscious guilt will ever be emboldened to approach a spotless God—the only atonement, the knowledge of which will ever give hope and peace and heaven to a guilty world; and will he refuse to give the knowledge of this atonement? Has he done all this in fact for us, and will he, by refusing to tell what it is, leave us only to a *certain*, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation! It is incredible. I say not at what time in this world's history, nor whether in this or a future state; but that, sooner or later, the God of grace—that God who tells us in all his works and ways that he has in purpose or in fact, made an adequate atonement for human guilt, will also reveal its nature and its power. Having done the greater, he will also do the less. No act of an immutable God, no gift of his mercy, can be more certain than that of a revelation, declaring to the faith, the wonder, the gratitude, the joy of redeemed men, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

I have thus attempted to establish my third leading position:

III. That the importance and necessity of a revelation to the

great end of God in the creation and government of the world, give a strong probability, not to say a moral certainty, that he would give a revelation to men.

The next and last position now claims consideration, viz.:

IV. That which is claimed to be a revelation from God, and which is contained in the Bible, is what it claims to be.

The argument is this: God will give a revelation to this world. We take the Bible, and if we had heard nothing of it before, we read, examine, understand it; we see that it is exactly such a book as we have decisive reasons to believe God would give to man, harmonizing with all our just views of the character, the relations, the government of God; adapted wonderfully and perfectly to the wants, the character, the condition and prospects of man; fitted to secure the high end of his creation, even his perfection in character and in blessedness. Its actual effects confirm and illustrate its perfection as the means of this great end. The writers of the book assert its divine origin. It had not a human origin, for we have proved the necessity of just such a book from God, and that man would never make such a book. Now I ask, whence came this book? What is its origin? Is it from God, or is it not?









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