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## ARTICLE VI.

SIN AND SUFFERING IN THE UNIVERSE, AS RELATED TO  
THE POWER, WISDOM, AND LOVE OF GOD.

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I CANNOT persuade myself to enter upon this subject without frankly testifying to a deep sense of its difficulties, of its magnitude, and of its demand for profound humility and reverence toward God. Undeniably the subject has tasked the human intellect; has brought a painful strain upon human sympathy; and a stern moral trial upon man's confidence in God's wisdom and love. If these points are true in regard to a tithe of mankind, how immense is the interest involved in this subject, and how assiduously, and withal prayerfully, should we seek whatever light upon it God may in kindness bring within our reach.

My interest in this great question has been painfully deepened by the confessions of some good men who say in substance: "This subject is utterly dark to me; the study of it for a lifetime has given me not the first ray of light, not the first sensation of relief."<sup>1</sup> I cannot say this. My

<sup>1</sup> On the subject of "Sin and Suffering in the Universe," and speaking of its difficulties, Rev. Albert Barnes writes: "I confess for one that I feel them, and feel them more sensibly and powerfully the more I look at them and the longer I live. I do not understand these facts, and I make no advances toward understanding them. I do not know that I have a ray of light on this subject which I had not when the subject first flashed across my soul. I have read to some extent what wise and good men have written. I have looked at their theories and explanations. I have endeavored to weigh their arguments, for my whole soul pants for light and relief on these questions. But I get neither; and in the distress and anguish of my own spirit, I confess that I see no light whatever. I see not one ray of light to disclose to me why sin came into the world, why the earth is strewn with the dying and dead, and why men must suffer to all eternity. I have never seen a particle of light thrown on these subjects that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind, nor have I an explanation to offer, or a thought to suggest, which would be of relief to you." . . . . "When I

reflections on this subject have given me relief, I may truly say, great relief. I will not presume that I shall bring like relief to all, or even to many of my readers. I will not promise this for any of them; it must suffice me to set forth with great brevity, and with whatever clearness and simplicity I may be able, the points which afford this relief to me. I propose to treat the subject in the following method:

I. State what the difficulties are, and are assumed to be:

II. Refer to the sources of testimony and argument available to us on this subject:

III. Then meet the difficulties: first, severally and in detail; modifying some of the assumed facts, and looking for the reasons of the actual facts: and secondly, in general, by advancing sundry hypotheses which may account for the existence of sin and suffering in worlds made and governed by God.

I. The difficulties, actual and assumed, may be put thus:

1. That suffering should so constantly follow sinning.
2. That in the case of the infants of our race, suffering should precede sinning; and, in the case of the lower animals of our world, should fall upon the unsinning.
3. That, with infinite power to prevent it, God should suffer sin to exist at all.
4. That he should permit *so much* sin and suffering, whether considered absolutely, or relatively to the amount of holiness and happiness in this world or in the universe.
5. That the human race should become sinners without their own fault, under an economy virtually constituted by God himself.
6. That the question, How many and who of the race shall be saved, should be determined irrespective of their own agency.
7. That the penal consequences of incor-

look upon a world of sinners and sufferers; upon death-beds and grave-yards; on the world of woe, filled with hosts to suffer forever; when I see my friends, my parents, my family, my people, my fellow-citizens;—when I look upon a whole race all involved in this sin and danger; and when I see the great mass of them wholly unconcerned, and when I feel that God only can save them, and yet he does not do it, I am struck dumb. It is all dark, dark to my soul, and I cannot disguise it." — American Presbyterian Quarterly, Oct. 1869, p. 648.

rigible sin should, under God's law, be remediless and eternal, amounting to an utter wreck of well-being.

II. What sources of testimony and argument are available and legitimate on this subject?

Answering this point very briefly, I would say: (a) Our own experience and observation in this sinning world; (b) The voice of our own moral nature; (c) The holy scriptures accepted as God's revelation; (d) The course of God's actual administration over this world throughout the various epochs of its history.

So far we are in the realm of *facts*. But in a subject of this nature which, by universal admission, stretches away in some of its bearings beyond our actual knowledge — beyond the sphere of knowledge possible to us, at least as yet — there is legitimate place for *hypothesis*. We may make *suppositions* in regard to God's plans and purposes. In doing this we do not undertake to affirm absolutely what *is*; we only say what in our view *may be*. Of course it is properly required that any hypothesis should be, apparently to us, possible, and even probable. Certainly it must be one which cannot be proved impossible. Within these restrictions hypotheses may avail to relieve us very materially of the difficulties which invest this subject.

I. Taking up now the specific points of difficulty, we name:

1. That in the present world *suffering should so constantly follow sinning*.

Perhaps this point cannot be treated better than in the short method of asking, *What if it did not?* Suppose this great fact of our sinning world reversed, so that suffering follows sinning no longer. All sin being in its nature violation of law, we may get more definite views of the case if we analyze the comprehensive fact; suppose thus: (a) No suffering shall follow the violation of physical law; (b) No suffering shall follow the violation of the law of conscience; (c) No suffering shall follow the violation of the preceptive law of God.

Where are we now? (a) The drunkard, the glutton, the debauchee, are no longer confronted with pain, prostration, wasted nerve-power, premature disease, delirium-tremens, a death of horrors! Not one of this legion of woes—heretofore treading close on the heels of transgression—fastening its fangs into these violators of physical law, shall be felt or feared any more. The reign of sensuality is unrestrained by this troop of terrors. Its power at once becomes omnipotent; the masses rush fearlessly and headlong down into bestiality! (b) To heighten the impulses downward, or rather to let off the brakes, there is to be no more remorse, or even compunction for any sort or degree of sin. No sense of conscious wrong-doing brings trouble, fear, unrest. Now what is this but man with his moral nature dropped out? What looks like a man—what we have been wont to honor as a being of noble moral capabilities, has now suddenly sunk down into bruteness! You might as well reason of right and wrong with the swine. (c) Finally, to sweep away the last restraint upon sinning, carry out the supposition to its full length. There is to be no more rebuke of sin from even God himself. His law must be shorn of all penalty, whether in this world or the world to come. There must not remain even the *fear* of God's displeasure; for the legitimate way to manifest this is by the infliction of suffering. Then let the last, even the faintest, rebuke against sin be suppressed! Lift the flood-gates and let the torrents sweep, let depravity run riot in the universe!

Would this be an improvement upon the present and past order of things? If with all these restraints in full force sin yet wields a power over human souls so terrible, what a world of demons incarnate should we have at once without them! Judging from the limited efficiency of suffering to restrain from sinning, as things are and have been, how much of its influence could well be spared?

2. The second difficulty is, that in the case of the infants of our race suffering precedes sinning: and, in the case of the lower animals, falls upon the un sinning. It is claimed

that death reigned on this planet long ages before Adam fell.

First, *as to infants*: (a) It should not be assumed that we are in a condition to know and estimate all God's reasons for establishing a general, rather than an exceptional, law over the human race in respect to suffering and mortality. We can, however, see that the presumptions are greatly in favor of general law. (b) So far forth as the suffering of infants comes of the sin of parents, violating physical law either before the infant's birth or after, it stands related to the moral trial of the parents. Such suffering may be, and ought to be, a powerful motive to restrain them from these sins. We may often have occasion to suggest that moral trial and restraint upon sinning are matters of so great moment, in fact, and in the eye of God, that we may well afford to justify him for any expenditure of a thing so cheap as suffering for an end so infinitely valuable. (c) In the case of infants who live into years of moral accountability, their early sufferings may send down a wholesome influence into their responsible moral life. (d) In the case of those who die before moral accountability there is a group of precious testimonies which strongly favor the belief of their salvation in Christ. Foregoing, as we must, all extended discussion of this point, let it be suggested that the testimonies come from the general character of God, from what may be supposed to be one point in the covenant of redemption between the Father and the Son, as to his reward for his sufferings; and from various intimations which fell from the lips of Jesus touching his relations to children.

Secondly, *as to the unsinning animals*. (a) The remark made above as to a general law of mortality, rather than an exceptional one, in the same world, is pertinent here also. (b) The amount of suffering relatively to enjoyment in the unsinning races is probably very small, except so far as they suffer from the sins of men. (c) So far forth as the welfare of these unsinning races is made dependent on man, their creation and this dependence constitute no insignificant means for man's moral trial. Think of the sin and brutality

involved in hunting them down and murdering them for mere sport; and also in provoking them to fight each other for the excitement, the gratification, and the brutalizing of souls scarcely less brutal than they. Over against this, think of the culture of kindness and affection provided for in thoughtful and sympathizing care for their welfare. Here again the remark is in place, that, appreciating the value of suitable surroundings for the development of our entire nature, especially in infancy and childhood, our Maker has brought these lower animals into close relations to our race, and must be justified, therefore, even though the arrangement involve some liability to suffering on their part. (d) As to God's justice towards them personally, we really know too little to affirm or deny, on the basis of our knowledge of their destiny. But it is certainly due to God that, in view of all the revelations he has made of himself, we should trust him for this.

3. Far more grave and difficult is this assumed fact — that, *with infinite power to prevent sin, God should permit it in his moral universe at all.* Here the assumption, “with infinite power to prevent,” demands our most careful and discriminating attention.

No one can rationally doubt that God might have forbore to create moral beings at all. Then there would have been no sin in the universe. So, likewise, there would have been among created beings no holiness. And what a waste were a universe with no intelligent moral beings in it, capable of knowing, loving, serving, adoring the ever-blessed God! Such a mode of forestalling all sin is obviously not to be thought of, unless it be assumed that a moral universe would be utterly unmanageable, and God powerless to bring good out of its possible evil.

Yet, again, it is equally clear that with infinite foreknowledge and power, God, having created moral beings, might annihilate any individual or any race at some point prior to their foreseen sinning. But who can tell how sweeping, on this system, such annihilations would need to

become? Who can safely assume that God could justify himself before finite intelligences for such annihilations of his creatures, because of something anticipated by him, but not done by them—not done in the presence of those who are to consider and judge of God's ways, and who, by the supposition, have never seen sin and its consequences? Or who can say that such annihilations would accumulate any moral force against sinning, such as the presence of sin and its consequences is now actually accumulating in the universe? In fine, who can say, or believe, that this supposed policy would be any better than the one which God has adopted?

But a more difficult point yet remains. It is assumed that, with no light before created minds from existing sin and its consequences, God might have prevented all sin. In support of this position, appeal is made: (a) To the sinless angels; (b) To saints from earth kept holy in heaven; (c) To saints on earth, kept by grace from utter apostasy; (d) To a cherished belief that the material universe, except the abodes of fallen angels and fallen men, is filled with sinless moral beings.

Replying to these points in their order, I remark: (a) Some angels, once holy, have fallen. Who can say that the un-fallen are not held and confirmed in holiness through influences coming from *their* sin and doom? (b) Saints from earth in their eternal heaven have had a most impressive personal experience of the miseries of sin; they have felt the constraining, melting power of a Saviour's love; they have before them the woes of the lost. How illogical, therefore, is the reasoning which would prove from their case that *without* the moral force begotten of the facts of sin, punishment, and redemption, God is morally omnipotent to prevent the first sin and all sinning! (c) But God keeps his saints on earth from falling fatally. Yes; but he warns them solemnly against the known doom of the lost. (d) As to the assumption of countless orders of holy beings filling the material universe, the first condition precedent to the argument from their case will be to ascertain the fact of their existence; the



second, to show that they are sinless; the third, to show that they have never heard of Satan and his doom. We need *all* these three points proved; we have proof of none of them. This argument, therefore, from existing or supposed facts, fails in the vital point, viz. power to prevent all sin *without the moral influence afforded by known sin and its known consequences.*

But, entirely apart from any argument, and independently of any support from facts, real or supposed, devout minds are prone to assume that God must have infinite natural power to prevent all sin. Many of the best of men recoil from the thought of any limitations of any sort, under any circumstances, to God's power, or to its exercise, *as against sin.* This feeling may become so strong as almost or quite to preclude a candid examination of facts bearing on the case. Yet our only legitimate course is to study whatever facts God has brought within our knowledge, and weigh their bearings upon our main question.

It may be asked: Why disturb or question at all the assumption that God is omnipotent to prevent sin in free moral agents? The demand for serious inquiry on this point comes of the following facts: (a) There is a large amount of sin and suffering in our world, and some, at least, among fallen angels; (b) Admitting that God is the infinite Maker and Lord of the universe, this fact of sin and suffering must have very important bearings, favorable or unfavorable, upon his reputation before his intelligent creatures; (c) God righteously expects it of us that we justify his ways in regard to the existence of sin and suffering, so far as it lies within our power to do so; (d) In searching for the reasons why God permitted sin to enter the universe, we are utterly forbidden to assume any limitation or finiteness in his *love.* We *know* that sin and suffering have not come in because God was indifferent to their evils, and therefore became negligent of due precautions, or remiss in his endeavors to withstand sin; (e) Nor may we think of any short-comings *in wisdom.* It was not that he lacked skill to devise the best possible

methods of doing what was in its nature and relations possible, and what it was best on the whole for him to do.

But there must be *some reasons* why sin and suffering exist. If we cannot locate them precisely, perhaps we may narrow the possible field within which they must lie, and thus approximate toward the true solution of the problem. (1) Perhaps we have not duly estimated the difference between a morally acting mind and dead matter considered as a something to be acted upon. (2) Consequently, the problem how to prevent all sin may involve more inherent difficulty than we have been wont to consider, and of quite another sort. (3) Perhaps we have not sufficiently considered the necessity of *truth* as a means of morally influencing free, intelligent mind—mind created of God, as to its intelligence and free-will, “in his own image”; nor yet the necessity, especially in the infancy of created mind, of having truth *illustrated* and *made plain in act*—in the developments of real life. (4) We may not be so well able as the Infinite One is to judge how far, in ruling countless races of free moral agents, it may be wise for him to leave them to bear their own responsibilities, uncontrolled by himself, and within what limits he may wisely interpose a controlling influence upon their moral activities. (5) To apply this comprehensive fact to our own race definitely: Since the Holy Spirit condescends to plead with sinful souls, it may be quite beyond our province to judge under what laws and limitations he may wisely exert his influence, and, on the other hand, what measure or kind of resistance it may be inconsistent with his honor and with the best influence of God’s moral government over the universe, for him to forgive and overcome.

Thus the problem of preventing sin (and also the kindred one of converting sinners) is obviously one of which we *can know something*, but *cannot know everything*. We can know something, because we consciously have the powers and functions of free moral agents, and because we are in the midst of a world in which God is employing himself before our eyes in counteracting sin and in converting

sinner; but we cannot know everything, for the problem has relations and bearings which stretch away indefinitely beyond our utmost vision. Let us, at least, learn all we can from the legitimate sources of knowledge which God has opened to us.

If we study this great problem in the light of God's actual work in our world, as set forth in the scriptures, we shall meet these two apparent facts:

1. The work of salvation is carried forward *against obstacles; under limitations and restrictions.*

2. *It progresses and becomes more effective age after age, with the increase of light, with the advance made in the development of truth, and with the increasing materials of moral power.*

Are these apparent facts real?

1. As to the *point of limitations*:

(1) The scriptures seem to affirm it very explicitly. It is declared respecting a class of men specially enlightened, but supposed to fall away, that "it is *impossible* to renew them again to repentance" (Heb. vi. 4-6). Does not the divine agency for their salvation work under some sort of limitations? The scriptures also teach (Matt. xii. 31, 32) that a certain sin against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven, and certainly imply that some do or may commit it. Does not this sin carry with it a certain sort of limitation as to the power that saves? It is said of a certain city and its people that Jesus "could there do no mighty works," etc., and assigns as the reason, their unbelief (Mark vi. 5, 6). What shall be said of this "*could not*"? Of ancient Israel God said: "What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?" (Isa. v. 4.)

(2) It is assumed that the work of the Spirit on men's hearts is prosecuted under some limitations. Stephen charged it upon the Jewish Sanhedrim: "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts vii. 51). Paul (1 Thess. v. 19) exhorts: "Quench not the Spirit," implying, doubtless, the possibility of this sin. Need we be

reminded that this sin, in some form or degree of it, precludes the soul from salvation? Can we, then, be mistaken in assuming that the Spirit works for the salvation of men under certain limitations, growing out of their free moral bearing toward him?

(3) The scriptures teach that sinners perish because they resist God's effort to save them. Jesus said of the Jews: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John v. 40. See also John iii. 19; Acts xiii. 46; 2 Thess. ii. 10). Such declarations (neither few nor vague) imply that God's work of saving men operates under certain limitations, growing out of their voluntary perverseness and resistance.

(4) God protests most solemnly that the perishing of sinful men in their sins is *not* due to *his* will and pleasure, but to *theirs*. Thus, with the solemn oath, as if his feelings were outraged by their imputations against his loving heart, he said, through Ezekiel (xxxiii. 11): "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?" To the same purport is Ezek. xviii. 31, 32, and 2 Pet. iii. 9, etc. Thus God's will and pleasure respecting the repentance and salvation of sinners meet with resistance from their will and pleasure; and this resistance works a certain limitation upon his efforts to save them.

(5.) Not only in the negative form ["no pleasure"], but in most positive forms and in most touching words, the Lord expresses his earnest desire that sinners would hear, believe, obey, and live. Thus: "Oh, that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children forever" (Deut. v. 29. See also Deut. xxxii. 29; Ps. lxxxii. 13; Isa. xlviii. 18; Matt. xxiii. 37). Such sincere utterances (let their sincerity never be questioned!) prove that the lack of success in God's efforts to save sinners comes not from any lack of love for their souls. The limitations come in upon the side of their free-will and moral perverseness, not

on the side of his paternal love. As if to make this point doubly strong, the Lord testifies to his deep pain and grief when he is compelled to desist from further effort and see them perish. Thus, by Hosea (xi. 7, 8): "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I make thee as Admah? Mine heart is turned within me; my repentings are kindled together." So Christ, weeping over Jerusalem: "If [Oh that] thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke xix. 41, 42).

The passages referred to on these several points are familiar to all Bible readers. I cite them to show that God's work of turning sinners from their sins labors against obstacles, and is carried forward under limitations; that these limitations come upon it, not on the side of God's love, but on the side of the sinner's free agency, and of his power to resist the appeals of God's truth and the influence of his Spirit. Now must we not assume that free agency is essentially the same thing in all moral agents throughout the universe, and that the case of turning the sinners of our world to repentance may be taken to illustrate the nature of the obstacles that were to be encountered in any effort which God might make to prevent sin in the moral universe?

Deferring further remarks upon the validity of this method of argument, I proceed to certain other facts which bear upon both points above indicated, viz. (a) *limitation* of some sort; and (b) *progress* in the development of moral power.

(1) For some reasons there were certain limitations to the giving of the Holy Ghost before Jesus was glorified (in his ascension), which were removed by and after that event. "This spake he of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified" (John vii. 39).

(2) In the ages before Christ's incarnation the main appeals from God to men were designed and adapted to inspire *fear*; in the ages after the incarnation, to inspire *love*. In the former, "the fear of the Lord" was the first element of

piety, the most prominent; it was even another name for piety itself. But in the latter, "the love of Christ constraineth." Love to Christ became the test of piety, its prominent and paramount feature. Why is this? What hindered the same prominence to love in the former age as in the latter? Why were the moral appliances to withstand sin and beget piety so unlike in these two ages? Not to discuss this point exhaustively here, let it suffice to have alluded to this obvious and wide diversity, and to suggest that the fact indicates an advance from weaker elements of moral power to stronger; the weaker, however, being a natural necessity in their place, but the advance manifestly implying certain relative limitations of effective moral power in the former age, which were much less stringent in the latter.

(3) As one method of estimating proximately the moral forces in action at various periods of our world, we may compare the probable ratio of the saved to the lost. In the age before the flood, at its minimum; improved, yet still small, in the age from the flood to the coming of Christ; much greater in the Christian age thus far than in the ages preceding the Christian era; but by far the greatest of all in those "latter days," when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," when all the nations shall come up to Zion to become her sons and daughters, when "thy people shall be all righteous—the branch of God's planting, the work of his hands, that he may be glorified" (Isa. lx. 21). Certainly, this looks like an advance in the efficiency of applied truth, or, perhaps we should rather say, an accumulation of the *materials* of effective moral power, i.e. of truth so illustrated as to be available readily for moral influence on finite minds. But the very conception of growth, advance, carries with it the idea of more and less; in other words, the idea of certain limitations of effective moral force, which limitations are in process of time gradually overcome. To compare the antediluvian with the millennial age, and attribute the difference in manifested moral power to divine sovereignty, pure and simple, irrespective of the light of truth and the advance

made in its revelation before finite minds, is to quite ignore the Bible and the great facts of our world's moral history.

Recurring to the point of the validity of this method of argumentation, it would seem undeniable that the counteraction of sin in our world must be the same thing, *in its nature*, as the prevention of sin in a universe of moral agents, even as a part bears the nature of the whole. Now, it must aid us essentially in solving the great questions, *Wherefore* is sin? *Why* did not God always prevent it? if we can ascertain *where the difficulties lie*; and particularly, if we can legitimately withdraw them from the *moral character of God*, showing that they evince no lack of perfect love; and if we are able to narrow them down to the essential nature of intelligent, free, morally acting minds. This broad field includes the necessity of *truth* as a means of morally influencing intelligent mind; also, the necessity, especially in the infancy of created beings, of having truth *manifested* — made palpable — illustrated in act, so that it may be apprehended impressively; also, the question at what point the best interests of a moral universe will be subserved by leaving moral agents to bear their own responsibilities; God's effective control being withheld; or, — to put this point in the practical form which it assumes in our world, — at what point God is bound, in honor, and for the best interests of his moral universe, to say: My Spirit shall be no longer insulted and blasphemed with impunity.

Here let it be distinctly understood that our argument by no means requires us to assign the amount of influence coming in from each one of these several points. No being but God is competent to set off the several amounts. It should suffice us to see that the reasons why sin exists in the universe are essentially the same in kind as the reasons why so much sin has existed in our world, despite of God's real and constant efforts to withstand it and to convert men from it.

Thus it appears that we must essentially modify the very common assumption that God has permitted sin in his moral universe, *having infinite power to prevent it*. This assump-

tion — “infinite power to prevent” — has begotten the main difficulties of the sin-problem. The sensitiveness of many good men touching this whole question hinges around this point. It seems to them derogatory to the infinite God to admit any sort of limitation to his power as against sin and as toward its prevention, or the recovery of sinners from its dominion. To all such sensitive thinking and feeling, let it be suggested, that it is in no sense derogatory to God’s power to say that he cannot save sinners of our race without an atonement, cannot save them without their personal faith in the atoning Redeemer, cannot save them without their repentance. Such a “cannot” should startle no one; should never be thought of as involving any dishonorable limitations of God’s power. Indeed, such limitations in God’s plans and principles as to human salvation are to his infinite glory. Nor is it any impeachment of God’s power, or of his moral character in any respect, that he should recognize the nature of intelligent, free, and morally acting minds, and adapt his agencies upon them accordingly, that is to say, that he should assume the necessity of truth as a motive to right moral action; nor, considering the finiteness of created minds, and especially in the infancy of their existence, that he should recognize the need of truth *illustrated in act*; nor, considering the importance of developing the personal responsibilities of moral agents, that he should see it wise (at some point known only to himself) to leave their freedom to bear its own responsibilities, and that he should set limits to his controlling influence upon their free-will; nor, considering how vast his moral universe is, or at least may become, that he should bear himself toward its fallen races with a large and wise regard to the best interests of all the yet-unsinning and yet-to-be-created moral races of the universe. With profoundest reverence, it behooves us to assume that God’s wisdom in managing this whole moral system is simply perfect. Never let us derogate from his wisdom or from his love. The scriptures represent the Most High as being keenly sensitive to the least imputation against his justice,



his wisdom, or his love (See Ezek. xviii. 2, 3, 23, 29-32 ; xxxiii. 10, 11, 17, 20). No similar sensitiveness appears in his word on the point of limitations in the line of actually saving sinners. There seems to be never a thought of its being derogatory to God's power to say: "It is *impossible* to renew them again to repentance"; or, to say that sinners whom he labors and longs to save, yet *will* resist his Spirit, and forever die.

To this entire train of remark upon the limitations incident to the saving of men, it may, perhaps, be objected that the words of our Lord, "With God all things are possible" (Matt. xix. 23-26; Mark x. 23-27), lie squarely and fatally against it. A careful attention to this case will show that the thought of the disciples was this: If rich men cannot be saved, who can be? That is, their point was not the question whether God could save all men, nor the question *why* he does not, but whether he could save a particular class, viz. the rich. Now, legitimately, Christ's answer should be construed in the light of the disciples' question. So construed, it would seem that Christ did not intend to speak of God's power to save all men, but rather of his power to save men of *any class* in society. It would have been exceedingly disastrous to have left on their minds the impression that any given class of men are necessarily beyond God's power to save. Christ would have us beware not to set limits of our own to his power to save men in such a way as to block our efforts for their salvation. Of these limitations, in any particular case, let him alone be the judge.

4. A fourth point of perplexity involved in the ways of God respecting sin, is that he permits *so much* sin and *so much* suffering, whether considered absolutely, or relatively to the amount of holiness and happiness.

Replying, first, to the point of suffering, let it be noted that suffering is to be charged entirely to the account of sin. But for sin, it would (so far as we can see) have no place in the universe. Any measure of suffering, however terrible, is cheap as an antidote for sin, or a moral warning against

it ; that is, if it turn sinners from the error of their ways, or warn the yet unsinning against so dire an evil. Wise men count suffering a small price to pay for life in its low sense of earthly existence. How much more is the price cheap as paid for life everlasting. If we do not see the truth and force of this now, we shall (all scripture and reason conspire to show) when the suffering is past, and only the glory remaineth.

Next, as to the great amount of permitted sin. Here it will be seen that the suggested distinction between the amount viewed *absolutely*, and the amount viewed relatively to the resulting holiness and happiness, is practically of no account ; the relative amount being the only real question. For whether the amount be absolutely great or absolutely small, it is certainly permitted to fall upon the offspring of an infinitely holy and compassionate God, only for the sake of greater holiness and happiness to be secured in the end by means thereof. This must be true, if God be indeed wise and good. Consequently, the only real question should be, whether the price paid for the holiness and happiness of his universe is too great — a question which infinite wisdom is (to say the least) much more competent to decide than any finite wisdom can be. However, one element in this estimate is indicated for us in the view which the scriptures give as to the relative numbers of the saved and of the lost in our own fallen race. On this point, the somewhat common assumption that, in the grand antagonism between Christ and Satan for the souls of men, Satan bears off the greater spoils of victory, is squarely against the doctrine of the scriptures. Wherever they touch this point, — the relative issues of this mighty conflict, — they show us the serpent snapping at the heel of his opponent, but coming out of the fight with his own head “bruised,” or, as Paul would say, “trodden under the feet” (Rom. xvi. 20). In the showing of Isaiah (liii. 10–12) the Messiah shall “see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied,” because in the division of the spoils, he has the “great” share — “the many” — for his portion. A result

which is satisfactory to the world's Great Sufferer—the compassionate, the sympathizing “Man of Sorrows”—should satisfy all other reasonable minds. And it is surely very kind in the great Disposer to bring within our reach one element of calculation bearing so naturally upon the solution of this great problem. For if the effort to turn sin and suffering to account toward a greater salvation—may we say, toward a remunerating, a paying result of salvation—were to be in our world a failure, the trial to human faith would be sharp indeed. We ought to be devoutly thankful that God spares us this trial. The results of glorious victory on this field of conflict are not only joyous in themselves considered, but ineffably glorious when taken as a unit of calculation, a sample product, to indicate what we are to expect on the great scale of the universal conflict against sin in God's moral universe.

5. A fifth point is that *the human race should become sinners without their own fault, under an economy virtually constituted by God himself.*

It is unfortunate that good men should sometimes put this point in a way to bear with unjust severity against the economy of God. In his vindication it should surely be held that, inasmuch as all sin is voluntary, according to his own definition is “transgression of law,” therefore no human being ever sins, or even begins to sin, save by his own fault. The first sin as truly as the last, and every other, is voluntary transgression of law, and therefore is the fault of the sinner. Again, it is vital to a fair understanding of this subject that we become familiar with the distinction between sin and its antecedent temptations or occasions; i.e. between what is really sin and what are only the antecedent occasions or temptations inducing it. The scriptures recognize this distinction; so does the common-sense of mankind. Applying this distinction to the relation of the race to Adam's sin, it must be obvious that it is not the sin itself which is transmitted, a thing naturally impossible, but only the occasions, the antecedents of sin. But some one will say, These oo-

casions, these antecedents, of sin exist under an arrangement of which God is the supreme author. In part this is true; and the defense to be set up in his behalf may be this; that the general laws under which the race are born are wise and good—the best possible under all the circumstances of the case. The fundamental point in these laws (touching the question in hand) may be expressed on this wise: *Like produces like*; the offspring, at least as physically considered, follow the parent. But is not this provision wise and good? Suppose it were set aside, and were the law no longer. Then the most careful observance of physical law on the part of parents would no longer conduce toward health or beauty in their offspring. No fond mother would any more look for the lineaments of parentage in her babe. It might be a Hottentot. It shall bear no trace of being her own, no trace of its father. Would this be deemed an improvement upon the present order of nature? Besides, may there not be a most wise design in establishing so close a connection physically between parent and offspring, that the violation of physical law on the part of parents shall be visited upon their children, and upon themselves through their children; and, on the other hand, its conscientious observance shall be in the same way rewarded; both results coming in ways of most effective moral power? Is not that hand wisely guided which puts motives so powerful toward right conduct into the very constitution of the family, into the laws of offspring? Is it not safe to say that God cannot afford to lose from this moral realm of his an influence toward the observance of law so potent as this?

Exception has sometimes been taken against the law of development, under which man's intellectual and moral powers unfold slowly and late, compared with his susceptibilities to pleasure. His universal sinning is by some attributed to this arrangement, and it has been deemed unwise. But is it well considered how much opportunity and how much power for childhood culture and training are lodged in parental hands by this very arrangement? Suppose

the human offspring were to mount up into its complete development in as little time as kittens, and parental responsibility and care were to cease as soon? Would this be an improvement in a world of moral agents, where moral training involves interests so momentous?

Yet again, under the general head of fault-finding with our Maker for the laws of the human constitution, some will scarcely forgive him for permitting the existence of any susceptibility to animal enjoyment; or, in the more common phrase, any appetites, passions. Perhaps they fail to consider that without susceptibilities to happiness there could be no happiness; without appetite for food, no enjoyment from food, nor indeed any healthful functions of animal life. Verily, it was neither a mistake nor a misfortune that God made us capable of enjoying our daily bread, and, on the same principle, every other truly constitutional, created susceptibility to pleasure. It is no sin, nor even misfortune, to have these constitutional capabilities for enjoyment. It is a sin to indulge them beyond a certain line, not difficult to trace by the aid of human experience and common sense. That a moral being should be put on his moral trial; i.e. placed in circumstances where wisdom and duty require him to govern himself, and obey the revealed will of his Maker, whether made known in the scriptures or in the laws of his being, is altogether in harmony with the laws of his created constitution; is what he was made for; is entirely essential to his becoming virtuous and happy. Without such surroundings he might as well have had no moral nature.

But some one may say: "All this only brushes the surface of things. Why not go to the bottom, and admit that all the mischief lies in the intrinsic evil of matter, the virus of sinful flesh and blood? Why not admit that if God had made man a pure spirit, and kept him clear of any contact with matter, all had been well?"

The first point of reply may fitly suggest that, so far as we know, the first sin in the universe (that of Satan) had not the least connection with this assumed vitiosity of matter;

and it seems to have been the very worst possible form of sin. The assumption underlying this objection is therefore quite unsustained by the logic of facts pertaining to the first falling race.

But I would reply further : If this assumption were true — if matter, or more definitely, if human flesh and blood were inherently and essentially sin, or even if it were the necessary cause of man's sin — then we must meet the question : Who made it so ? And, for one, I see no answer that I can consent to give. But I have this to say : The premises are utterly false. For sin is in mind, not in matter. Mind *can* sin; matter *cannot*. Sin may be in mind, and mind may be said to contain, or hold it ; but sin never can in this sense be *in matter*. And as to its being the necessary cause of sin to man, I may reassert that it was by no mistake, or blunder, or fault of the Creator, that he gave existence to matter, and ordained the present wonderful connection of human souls with material bodies. Matter is to mind the primary means of culture, development, discipline, both intellectual and moral. Who knows that we could even begin to think without its aid ? Where do we get our first words, our earliest mental conceptions, but from this material world ? This subject is too vast to be discussed here. Let it suffice to say that those who make matter the primary fountain of all sin, and charge the responsibility for all sin upon it, and through it upon its Author, have probably more to learn in respect to the agencies and utilities of matter than they have ever dreamed of.

It is not assumed that the points made here in vindication of the ordained connection between Adam and his race exhaust the subject, or will explain its difficulties fully, and to the satisfaction of all. It is rather my purpose to show that the divine hand in the beginnings of sin in our race is not invested with unmitigated darkness ; that his moral character is not thereby involved in inscrutable mystery, and, to all human view, in unrelieved perplexity. To show this is one thing. It is quite another to “find out the Almighty to perfection.”

6. Other difficulties lie in the assumed doctrine that the question, how many and who of the race shall be saved, is determined in the counsels of God, *irrespective of man's agency*. The limits proper for this essay forbid an exhaustive discussion of this point, but must not forbid this brief reply; that in my view the assumption is not according to the scriptures. On the contrary, the scriptures state explicitly that the decision of eternal destiny, so far from being made by God "*irrespective of man's agency*," is made precisely *according to man's agency*, i.e. according to the deeds he has done or not done, and the character he has formed (see Matt. xxv. 31-46 and Rom. ii. 6-16). If it be replied that these passages contemplate the case only as seen on its human side, not on its divine; as seen in the revelations of time and of the judgment-day, and not as seen in God's eternal counsels, then I answer: No discrepancy is possible between God's purposes in eternity and their unfolding in time. The unfolding here must follow the plan there, and therefore must be to the view of men, and of all created minds, the illustration and development of those eternal counsels. The human side, so called, brought out thus before finite minds, cannot possibly give any false or distorted view of the divine side. All the principles involved in the processes of salvation here in time are simply the unfolding of God's eternal plan, and cannot possibly fail to represent that plan correctly. It were simply absurd to suppose that, viewed in its principles, God's eternal plan is one thing, and his actual administration in time and at the final judgment another. Hence, it is not only proper, but is demanded of us, that we relieve our minds of whatever perplexities and difficulties grow out of the assumption that God determines the future destinies of men irrespective of their own agency. There is infinite fitness and truth in his appeal to the reason of his sinning creatures: "Are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?" (Ezek. xviii. 25, 29).

7. Lastly, it is thought inexplicable that the penal consequences of sin under God's law are remediless and eternal,

amounting to the utter wreck of well-being, the loss of all good, the endurance of eternal woe.

It is obviously not to be expected that our finite minds, so largely shut in within the bounds of our planet, and, indeed, scarcely beginning to comprehend the moral bearings of the divine law and of its penalties even here, should grasp all the mischiefs of sin, or measure all the interests to be protected by its punishment. Yet all good government, and all right conception of justice, assume that the penalty for the violation of law should in general be graduated by the value of the interests which transgression sacrifices, and which law with its penalty is bound to protect. Studying the law of God and its penalties in the light of this principle, we cannot yet see everything, but we can see some things: e.g. (1) That sin itself involves the wreck of the sinner's happiness, independently of the positive penalties of God's law. Hence it were simply unjust toward God to ascribe the loss of the sinner's well-being solely, or even mainly, to his positive penalties. (2) Within our actual knowledge of the extent of the moral universe, we can see that the interests to be protected by the penalties of God's law, i.e. by God's manifesting his utter displeasure against sin and sinners, are immensely great. (3) But if we enlarge our conception of God's moral universe, and assume (as we may) a perpetual process of new creations of moral races to be held in obedience by the moral power of these penalties on the sinning, our view opens out at once into infinity; we can set no limits even in thought to the vast interests to be protected, to the vast results of good to be reaped from the unending penalty visited upon transgression. (4) One more supposition may serve to heighten our view of the wisdom, and therefore the justice, of making the penalty for sin eternal; viz. that the problem before the divine mind may have been the choice between one eternal hell, and an eternal succession of hells, not eternal but temporary. Let it be granted by supposition that either at each sinner's death, or at the final judgment, or at any other point in the duration of his being, God terminates



his punishment by annihilation. Then there will remain no visible record of his doom, no witnessing testimony from his punishment, potent in its moral bearings to warn moral agents against sin. Assuming that created moral beings are finite in mental powers, they must gradually lose the impressions which the drama of sin and suffering will have produced. No matter, to our argument, how slow the process may be by which those facts, once so appalling, fade out of their minds. Given the least conceivable waning, and the time will come when the last vestige will have faded out, and the wholesome moral influence from sin and suffering will have utterly ceased to act. Then if there was moral value in those experiences and manifestations of sin and consequent suffering, it is at this point finally lost, and sin may enter again; other races may fall; and the same fearful experiences may all need to be repeated. Moreover, if we accept the supposition that new races are from time to time to be brought into being, it will be seen at a glance that it would be the extreme of unwisdom to incur the introduction of sin and its woes into the universe again. Infinitely rather let the two races that have sinned already, suffer according to the demands of justice for a whole eternity, and let God's wisdom and love be honored for choosing one eternal prison-house for the incorrigible sinners of these races, rather than an eternal succession of transient penalties, involving the ultimate loss of all the moral power thence accruing toward a holy and happy universe.

III. It remains to consider certain *hypotheses* which bear upon the main question, and which assign supposable, probable reasons for the divine arrangement under which sin and suffering exist in the universe. Some of these hypotheses having been suggested already, the ensuing discussion will only treat those points more fully.

That these hypotheses may be seen more surely in their true light, let it be considered: (a) That, in its very nature, holiness is intelligent, voluntary obedience to truth, i.e. to known truth respecting God and duty. This position needs

not argument, but statement only. (b) Hence truth is an indispensable means to holiness, and an essential element of power in the conflict against sin, whether for its prevention or its cure. The scriptures recognize this fact abundantly, representing that the Holy Spirit is "the Spirit of truth"; a teacher of truth, who shall "teach all things"; that regeneration is by and with the truth, since it is written: "He begat us with the word of truth" (Jas. i. 18); also, Christians are "born again by the word of God," and "purify their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (1 Pet. i. 22, 23). Jesus prays, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth" (Jno. xvii. 17). Note also the language of the new covenant: "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their heart." To "know the Lord" is synonymous with true piety. The faith that saves, is accepting and obeying gospel truth. (c) By a necessity common to all finite natures, the human mind needs to have truth illustrated, i.e. set forth in actual life, in real development, in order to see it clearly and feel adequately its moral force. Under this principle we have God manifested before human eyes in his incarnate Son. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Jesus revealed God to men, not in his words alone, but in *himself*—in every act, in every look, in every pain endured for men, in every tear. On the same principle God illustrated his moral law and government *in human history*, in the long series of events in which his righteous hand has been manifested from Adam to this hour. So also the penalty of this law has been set forth—only in symbol it is true and with imperfect illustration—in the sufferings which have been sent upon a sinning world as the witness of God's displeasure against sin, and of his condemnation of the sinner. In the infancy of his being, Adam must have lacked this element of forceful illustration of truth. He heard the words: "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die" (Gen. ii. 17); but the sense of these words must have been dim to his mind when as yet he had not seen in his own race the first case of literal death—the symbol of the penalty

threatened. The first human death gave him (apparently) the first element for the estimate by which to calculate the force of this penalty. A far deeper sense of God's displeasure against sin fell on those who saw the flood — a whole race of sinners swept from the face of the earth so suddenly and fearfully. More yet was seen when Sodom was "set forth as an example" of what it must be to "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire." Thus, step by step, the process went on of revealing truth concerning God, his law, and his character. It was a constant accumulation of the materials of moral power.

It is now in place to suggest certain hypotheses bearing (supposably) upon the purposes and agency of God in the existence of sin.

1. It is supposable, and by no means violently improbable, that the first sin in the universe — say that of Satan — was due largely to the fact, that he had neither experience nor observation as to the miseries of sin and its ruinous consequences; and no adequate sense of God's abhorrence of sin, or of the fearful curse involved in his displeasure. After the first sin, new elements come in to deprave the moral agent. The power of one sin to beget another and to intensify the sinning spirit is a law of moral agency, alas, but too well known in human experience, and yet, prior to human experience, never duly appreciated. In the case of our first parents, we may add to this list of antecedent occasions of sin, the infancy of their minds, and the subtle temptations of an already hardened and desperate rebel against God.

2. In projecting a scheme for the largest conceivable creations of moral races, running on down the ages indefinitely, not to say infinitely, God may have seen it to be practically impossible to fence sin out from the whole limitless field while permitting such range of freedom to his creatures as would secure the fullest development of their powers. It may, therefore, have been clear to the infinite mind that the best scheme possible to him would be one in which some sin might occur which he could turn to account,

taking advantage of it to evolve therefrom a mighty moral force against sin and unto holiness throughout his moral universe. In yet other words, the wisest scheme possible to God may have included the presence of so much sin as now is, and is to be, in the two fallen races — the angels that sinned, and man — this being suffered to exist because God foresaw that he could accumulate from it the materials of moral power for use in his infinite moral kingdom. (a) On this point it is legitimate to reason from the known moral character of God. Infinite love can have no pleasure in either sin or death, and would shut out from the universe both sin and suffering, if it could be done in such a way as would insure the highest holiness and happiness of his created universe. Infinite wisdom will never make the mistake of framing a system involving more sin and more suffering rather than one involving less, or none at all, save for the reason of a greater good to accrue from it than was possible to him upon any other system. That is to say, we may boldly infer *a priori* from the known love and wisdom of God that his reasons for creating moral agents at all who would (as he knew) sin and suffer, must be found in some compensating good which he saw that he could educe from their sin and suffering. No reasons other than this are at all admissible. This class of reasons, and this only, has no conflict with infinite love or wisdom.<sup>1</sup> (b) This hypothesis is favored by the consideration above suggested as to the

<sup>1</sup> This view of the divine economy as related to the existence of sin may need to be guarded against two possible misapprehensions; viz. (a) That God so changes the nature of sin as to make it, if not a good in itself, at least good in its natural, legitimate influence — a thing intrinsically absurd; (b) That the sin which God suffers to exist, he cannot honestly hate, forbid, and oppose. This notion also is to be utterly rejected. God is infinitely honest in his opposition to *all* sin. He abhorred, forbade, and punished the murder of his incarnate Son, and not a whit the less so for the fact that he wrought out by means of it the salvation of myriads of lost men. I must also suggest the importance of discriminating between the greatest good possible to God, some of his moral subjects opposing by their sin; and the greatest good possible, or at least supposable, on the assumption that no moral subject opposes, but all concur in perfect obedience.

necessity of illustrated truth to meet the wants of finite minds, especially in the infancy of their being. (c) It is also favored, not to say sustained, *by the moral history of our world.*

Here I make these points: That the moral forces of illustrated truth were at their lowest point, their minimum, in the age before the flood; that they received a very considerable accession from that fearful catastrophe; were heightened from that event onward by every judgment that fell from Jehovah's hand; also by all the demonstrations made of his parental faithfulness and mercy to his covenant people; that an immense accession accrued from the incarnation of the Messiah, and the mission of the Spirit sent forth to witness to the truth as to Jesus, and to utilize the moral forces of those manifestations of God in human flesh; and finally, that the moral force of truth is destined to reach its maximum when "the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth as the waters cover the sea." Reverting to the period of least moral power, we find that every known fact respecting the antediluvian age witnesses to the prevailing wickedness of the masses. "All flesh had corrupted his way"; "the wickedness of man was great in the earth." The causes, positive and negative, are not far to seek. Sickness almost unknown; the average physical vigor of the race at the highest point ever reached in human history; death far away, and present to their eyes only at long intervals; never was the principle so fearfully verified that "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. viii. 11). The moral power of suffering to restrain from sinning was at its lowest point. The whole arrangement looks like an experiment on the part of God, not to enlighten himself, but to enlighten the race of men, and, indeed, of angels as well, in respect to the wisdom and safety of prolonging so far the average period of earthly probation. God knew very well that cavillers would object to the limit of three score years and ten, as too short for the decision of

destinies so momentous, and, therefore, as morally implicating him in the ruin of souls. Hence this experiment, made in those earliest ages, was God's vindication of himself on the score of wisdom and love in permitting suffering and mortality to take on more fearful activity, greatly to the shortening of the average term of human life. This very vindication became an element of moral power. As soon as it became prudent to make the change, the intensified agencies of suffering and death in the race served to impress man with more fear of God and with a more adequate sense of the wrongs and the woes of sin.

I have already remarked the striking fact that during all the early ages of our race the first end sought in the moral culture of the race was to impress *the fear of God*. In the nature of sinning mind, this was the first thing to be done. The law must be the "schoolmaster to bring men to Christ." A sense of guilt and want is the hungering and thirsting for the waters of life,—is therefore absolutely essential to awaken any interest in a Saviour from sin and its curse. It was a great advance in the elements of moral power when Jesus came to our world, and made such manifestations, not mainly of the fearfulness of law and penalty, but of the unutterable compassion and love of God for lost man. If the question be asked: Why did the Lord delay the advent of the Messiah four thousand and more years from the fall, and what was he doing all this time in moral work for the race, the answer comprehensively would be: (a) developing the force of law and penalty (as shown above); (b) *Illustrating the grand idea of atonement for sin*. By a wonderful system of sacrifice (coupling the ideas of innocence and of suffering unto blood), he was unfolding the great central fact of redemption, and preparing men to grasp the true idea of a "Lamb of God" coming and dying "to take away the sin of the world." This fact was too momentous to be thrown out before the race without ample illustrative developments of its significance going before.

The main points, then, which I make from the history of

God's moral ways in our world are: the fact of constant *progress* from the lower elements of power to the higher; and the fact of a continued *accumulation* of moral forces. These facts are before us. It were simply folly to attribute them to divine sovereignty in such a sense as would rule out all inquiry for the reasons of these facts. Rather let us assume that God not only expects, but requires us to study his ways, and to infer from what he lets us see, how, and on what principles, he manages his moral realm in those provinces which lie beyond our immediate view.

3. It may be that we are only in the infancy of God's moral universe; that God has only begun to create moral beings; and, therefore, is now, and up to this point has been, accumulating the means of augmented and adequate moral power in order to prepare the way for creating and holding in obedience new races, on a scale more vast than we can comprehend. The human race is certainly in its infancy. Measured against the probable duration of our world under its gospel dispensation, and much more, measured against our immortal life — the revealed destiny of the race — we are only entering upon the threshold of our eternal being. That the fallen angels also are in the infancy of their existence is reasonably inferred from the revealed fact that their official, public trial and judgment has not yet transpired.

That these two are the only fallen races may be inferred from the following facts and considerations: (a) That the criminal docket for the final judgment-day, at the close of our present earthly probation, comprises these two races, and no other. (b) That the diverse circumstances connected with their fall seem to be exhaustive of all the varieties known or conceivable: the first race, without any antecedent tempter; the second, with and under such antecedent temptation: the first, sinning independently of any known relations of spirit to flesh; the second, under the influence of such relations; the first commencing their sin independently of any conditions of birth; the second (as a race) beginning to sin under conditions incident to birth from a fallen pair. (c) The

diverse methods of God's moral treatment of these two races are exhaustive of all supposable methods; being in the first case a system of unmixed simple justice; in the second, a system of blended justice and mercy. So far as we can conceive, there can be no third system. These two are exhaustive. (d) Finally, the revealed fact that all the holy beings of the then created universe are summoned, and will be present at the final judgment of these two races. All these points have the aspect of *summing up the moral lessons* of these two great exhaustive systems of God's moral government over the fallen of his universe, and bringing them out before all the intelligent beings then existent, putting them, so to speak, on eternal record, as a vast storehouse of the materials of moral power — *manifestations of the infinite God*, mighty in their influence both on those already born, and on races to be created in untold myriads, age after age.

4. It may be that God's plan contemplates (and is of purpose constructed to admit) the least amount of sin and suffering that will suffice to accumulate sufficient materials of moral power to hold the yet unsinning races in perfect obedience forever, and to hold in universal obedience all moral races yet to be created. This hypothesis makes two main points: (a) The *object* to be attained by permitted sin and suffering; (b) The *limitation* of the permitted amount to the least sum that will suffice to secure the object. In support of the first-named point, it need only be said, that the object is worthy of God, is in harmony with his revealed moral perfections, and in accord with what we see in his moral administration of our world. As to the second point, — the limitation of sin and suffering to the least amount adequate to secure the object, — let it suffice that his love demands precisely this limitation, and that, with the means of moral power which on these suppositions are provided, his wisdom knows how to secure it.

5. It being assumed that no other moral races have yet been created, save that known in the scriptures as "angels" (the fallen and the unfallen) and men; it being also assumed



that God's moral administration in respect to sin and suffering contemplates as one main object the accumulation of moral forces and the materials thereof for use against sin and in the promotion of holiness; it being assumed, also, that the final judgment will be the grand concentration of these illustrative forces, the great culminating point in their accumulation, we may advance to make two other main hypothetical suppositions, viz. (a) That in the eternal state beyond the general judgment (as in our present life) God will take into his service and utilize the activities of all his holy subjects, both the unfallen and the redeemed; employing them as his witnesses in respect to his character, his government, and the past history of his manifestations, and especially that he will use them in the education and culture of moral races thenceforward to be created. (b) That, making the close of the judgment scene the starting-point for new moral creations, God will proceed in this magnificent work of filling the material universe with moral agents as rapidly as the appliances of moral instruction and impression will admit. As to the first of these points, I cannot bring myself to question for one moment that God will make both his redeemed and his unfallen children as truly "laborers together with himself," "workers together with God," throughout the eternal ages, as he does now in time, both in earth and in heaven. It would be quite superfluous to cite proofs to show that God's plan here in time takes in his redeemed people as "laborers" together with himself, witnesses to himself and his truth; that Jesus trained and sent out men for this work, promising (and giving) his presence and his Spirit. The reasons for this arrangement were, perhaps, not so much Christ's need of their doing such work as *their* need of such work to do. The case may not exclude the former; it does specially include the latter. And must not the same law of necessary activity obtain in eternity as in time? Instead of asking whether we can afford to accept such a working existence for our eternal heaven, we might more fitly ask: How can redeemed souls possibly be happy in heaven without

something to do for their Redeemer, without positive *work* in the interests of his supremely great salvation as it looks abroad over the universe, and grasps the infinite moral welfare of myriads born and to be born from age to age forever? Gifted with capacities for perpetual growth in mental and moral power, and for perpetual progress in knowledge, and shut up to the great *law of activity* as the fountain of supreme blessedness; held, moreover, by the love they bear to their Redeemer, and by a sense of infinite obligation for his redeeming sacrifice, what nobler, loftier service for them to do can our little minds conceive as possible or supposable? The thought thereof being once suggested as within the range of possibility, it would seem that the hosts of the redeemed would rise up to implore that there might be no failure of a consummation so devoutly to be wished. We who are so often sad that our aspirations toward more service for Christ on earth should be so soon broken down by infirmity or cut short in death, let us think of these opening fields for everlasting service, with powers never waning, but ever growing, and lift up our heads with joy! That our elder brethren, the sinless angels, have active service in their present heavenly life, stands out all through the sacred word. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation?" And shall it be supposed that their interest and sympathy in the great things of God's kingdom are to die out, or their feet tire of their messenger service?

As to the second point in our last-named hypothesis,—viz. new creations of moral races taken up and pushed actively forward from and after the final judgment,—it would seem sufficient to suggest that after the developments made by so much sin, and after the sacrifices involved in so much suffering, jointly evolving materials of moral power so indefinitely vast, it is simply impossible that infinite wisdom and infinite love should not turn these materials of moral influence to account—should not utilize them toward the utmost possible amount of intelligent moral happiness. Here are facts of moral bearing concerning God abundantly ade-

quate (we may doubtless assume) to command the admiration of intelligent beings — facts, therefore, richly fraught with moral power to hold new moral races in joyous obedience. God's justice toward sin has been forever vindicated; the fearful penalties endured and to be endured by sinning, lost souls are before the universe; the unutterable compassion of God shines out in One who stands in the midst of the living ones and elders, "as a Lamb that has been slain" (Rev. v. 6); and there is a great cloud of witnesses to testify for God and to give the service of their utmost powers; how, then, can God forbear to multiply intelligent minds to be blessed forever with the knowledge and the love of his name? Let it be supposed that somewhere in the lapse of the endless ages God were to reach a limiting line in his creative work, and to issue his proclamation: No more creations henceforth forever! No more worlds to be filled with beings "made in our image," with exalted powers of thought, of love, and of bliss! What a recoil would be felt throughout all the then existing universe!

It may seem to some that our little planet which we call earth is a small *base*, astronomically considered, for such stupendous operations — out of all proportion to the vastness of the astronomical universe as brought within the range of our telescopic vision. Very well; it *is* small; but we may remember it is written: "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; *with him also* that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. lvii. 15). It *is* small in its physical, astronomical relations, but not too small to have been trodden by Immanuel's feet; not too small to have been wet with his tears, or to have held his cross, or to have drunk in his atoning blood; not too small to have been the theatre of the Divine Spirit's glorious, though half unseen, power. It is not too small to have been the scene of many a sin and many a sorrow and many a penitent tear, which shall bear in their testimony a marvellous witnessing power to the infinite wisdom and love of God in bringing good out of evil, and in

making sin work out his praise — a power to be felt far down the ages of our eternal being, and far away in the worlds that people boundless space. Who shall assume to fix the limit in either time or space to the moral power that may go forth from the scenes of sin and suffering, and from the scenes of redeeming, restoring mercy that have impressed themselves into the history of this astronomically insignificant planet!

There is no occasion to push our hypothetical suppositions farther. Different minds will, doubtless, estimate variously the degree of probability belonging severally to the points suggested. It will suffice to justify their use *as hypotheses*, if they are fairly supposable, and cannot be proved impossible; and if, moreover, they present a possible scheme of divine operations which will turn sin and suffering to account on a scale infinitely vast, making the wrath of sin subserve God's praise and the blessedness of his intelligent moral universe to such an extent as will manifest his perfect wisdom and ineffable love before all his creatures through everlasting ages. Such views of God's plan ought, at least, to relieve our anguish of heart and our perplexities of thought over the sin and suffering which exist in the moral universe of God.