

ing to his own good pleasure. He chooses even the weakest things to confound the mighty, that no flesh may glory in his presence (1 Cor. 1: 27—29); he is pleased to make his power known by the use of the weakest and most despised instruments. Rejoice, O earth, for thou art a spectacle to angels, whose eyes are fixed upon thee; rejoice, for thou art the celestial Bethlehem; and, although thou art little among the thousands of the stars, yet out of thee shall He come forth who shall be the Ruler of the universe (Micah 5: 2).

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## ARTICLE II.

### GOD'S POSITIVE MORAL GOVERNMENT OVER MORAL AGENTS, ADDITIONAL TO THAT WHICH IS MERELY NATURAL.

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MORAL beings have a definite constitution by which they are honorably distinguished from all other beings. This constitution they have no power to annihilate or change; its essence and laws are as imperishable and immutable as the fiat of the Eternal Will and Wisdom which spoke them into existence and endowed them with immortality. By virtue of it, they are, from the moment their moral agency commences, not only capable, but under an absolute necessity, of recognizing a moral law, and themselves as subject to it; of obeying, or refusing to obey it; and of experiencing certain elements of happiness as results of obedience, and of unhappiness as results of disobedience. Such is their constitution; and the law, or rule of action, they recognize, is the law of God. The elements of happiness they experience, as natural consequences of obedience, are manifold: the approving smile and benedictions of conscience; inward harmony and peace; enjoyment arising from the consciousness of worthily combating and controlling the appetites, desires and passions; satisfaction from the consciousness of deserving the complacency of the intelligent universe; pleasure from witness-

ing the good they are able in any way to effect; delight from realizing the light of God's countenance beaming on the soul; blessedness conferred by hope, searching after and anticipating an eternity of virtue and its fruits; and such like things. The elements of unhappiness they experience, as natural consequences of disobedience, are manifold: the frowns and maledictions of conscience; inward tumult and war produced by collision of the perverse will with reason and conscience; conscious enslavement to pernicious and debasing habits, producing self-contempt and abhorrence; misery created by the consciousness that the frown of God is on the soul, and of deserving it and the execrations of the intelligent universe; jarring remembrances of the past, and tormenting forebodings of woes in the future; self-condemnation from witnessing the evil they do to others in so many ways; and such like things. These are the natural and necessary consequences of obedience and disobedience to the precept of that eternal and immutable law which binds all moral agents to God and to each other.

Now, it is maintained by some that these are the only sanctions of this Divine Law. They deny that God has promised to the virtuous any rewards, or threatened against the wicked any penalties, additional to these; and they accordingly repudiate all belief in a *positive moral government*, objecting to it as arbitrary, inconsistent with benevolence, unjust, and such on every account as God would not institute or administer. Of those who maintain this doctrine, some believe in the endless misery of those who die in their sins, and some do not. Those who do not, assume that, immediately upon passing into eternity, or at some subsequent period, they will exchange a sinful for a holy character, and the natural consequences of the one for those of the other, and will thenceforward continue holy and happy. Those who do, assume that, when the wicked die, their sinful character is confirmed, so that they will forever persevere in sin, and of course be forever miserable. They admit, however, that, if any should, at any stage of their future history, become *holy*, their misery would certainly terminate with their sin. The only difference between them, therefore, is, that the one believes that, at death or subsequently, all sinners will be renovated, while the other believes that none will be, who die impenitent. They both believe the connection between holiness and happiness, and between sin and misery, to be simply *natural*; they both

asperse the doctrine that God has instituted a positive moral government, and will bestow rewards and inflict punishments additional to the natural results of holiness and sin, as imputing arbitrariness to God and incongruous with his true character; and they both eulogize the view they take as the only one that consists with the Divine benevolence, or commends itself to rational assent.

It is a question of the highest importance whether this doctrine, or the one it opposes, is the true one; for it is very obvious that one of them must be true and the other false; and that whichever of them is false, must be radically at war with the entire system of truth presented to mankind in the word of God. Under the conviction that the difference between them is thus radical, we proceed to set forth some reasons why the one we have been exhibiting, should be rejected, and the opposite one maintained. The reasons for rejecting the former, will be direct arguments in favor of the latter.

I. The first objection we urge against this doctrine is, that, if it be true, God has in fact no proper moral government over his intelligent creatures. Moral government consists in the declaration and administration of moral law. The law consists of two parts—a *precept*, in which the rule is set forth in accordance with which moral agents are bound and required to act; and sanctions adequate to the importance of the precept, to allure and urge them to obey it. There can be no law without sanctions; for, without them, the precept would be mere advice, to be followed or not without hope or hazard of any other consequences than such as are the natural results of complying with, or disregarding it. The sanctions operate on the hopes and fears of all moral agents to whom they are actually addressed, alluring them to obedience by the good promised as its reward, and deterring them from disobedience by the evil threatened as its punishment; and the only way in which a ruler, as such, can contribute to the reign of the precept over the hearts and lives of his subjects, and thus actually be a ruler, is by administering the sanctions, using them as attractive lures and urgent goads to keep all on the path prescribed. The governmental function, therefore, is, in its very nature, an active and positive one, authoritative and controlling.

But, if the only rewards of virtue and punishments of sin are the natural consequences of each, it is self-evident that *the law*

is *self-executive*; and; on the supposition that moral agents could still continue to exist, if God were sunk into an eternal slumber, such as Hindû philosophy ascribes to Brahmâ during the eternity preceding creation, it would continue to execute itself to endless ages, the same as it will though he neither slumbers nor sleeps. It is, therefore, a ridiculous misnomer to call him a Moral Governor, if this doctrine be true. It reduces his office to "the veriest cipher of a function." It stands in the same category with the dogma of Epicurus, that "the Divine Nature is neither itself disturbed, nor does it give disturbance to others." If one had constructed a machine which, when once put in motion, would go on forever by virtue of its constitution, he might set it in motion and leave it thenceforward to itself, assured that, when he had lain in his grave ten thousand years, it would still be going the same as when it first began. His relation to his machine would be precisely similar to that which this doctrine makes to exist between God and his intelligent universe, so far as ruling it is concerned. Is this the conception of a moral government? It is not even a good parody of one. It presents us a Creator, not a Ruler; an Artist, not a Moral Governor. At bottom, it sustains to the true conception of the moral government of God, the same relation that the natural development-theory of the author of "The Vestiges of Creation" (according to which, all the worlds that roll in space, and all that they contain, were evolved from an exceedingly attenuated fire-mist, and formed into what they are by the operation of mere natural laws, without any help from God), does to the true conception of the creation. The one makes the universe *create*, the other makes it *govern* itself, by virtue of mere natural laws; and the legitimate tendency and effect of both alike is, to expel the idea of a living, acting, personal God, and all realizations concerning him, as much as possible, from the minds of men.

If it be answered, that God established the laws in both cases, and designed them to be self-executive, and that, therefore, after all, it is he that does all, we object to the answer itself, as repugnant to truth, inasmuch as it assumes that the laws, once established, are thenceforward forces independent of God; whereas, neither sound theology nor true philosophy can recognize them as anything else than *the will of God, or results of the will of God, constantly exerted according to his established purposes*. It divorces nature, throughout all her domains and all her departments, from

all direct Divine control or superintendence, and leaves her, as the ostrich leaves her egg in the sand, to unfold, and mould, and govern herself forevermore by virtue of her own inherent laws alone. The only merit it has, is, that it stops short of the insane absurdity of making the laws originate themselves. It therefore avails nothing as a defence of the doctrine against which we are objecting; for it is really that doctrine itself; and the obvious fact that, if it be true, there would be no interruption or change of the course of nature, or of the results of virtue and vice, if God should utterly abandon his creation, provided it could continue to exist without his upholding power (and no one can tell why it could not, if the assumption, respecting the independence and intrinsic efficiency of natural laws, is valid), shows, that, if it be true, God has not, and cannot have, a moral government. He has a creation, but no sceptre; he has established *natural laws*, but has enacted no moral ones; moral agents are without a sovereign, and God without subjects. There is, indeed, in the fact that virtue, *as such*, is naturally followed by the elements of well-being, and sin, *as such*, by the elements of ill-being, indicated in the beginning of this Article, a striking *analogy* to moral government; an actual exemplification of the principle and purpose of it; what may be called the *natural rudiments* of it; enough to raise the probability that God actually has, and will evermore maintain such a government, to a moral certainty; but, *in itself*, it does not constitute such a government, any more than it constitutes civil government among men. This will appear with additional distinctness in the course of what we are next to urge.

II. Our next objection to this doctrine is, that it is utterly incongruous with the benevolence of God. This, we proceed to show. All moral action is put forth in view of motives; i. e. motives are the moving forces which induce or impel moral agents to will and act. If we suppose all motives, prompting to either right or wrong action, to be withdrawn from a moral agent, we thereby suppose him to be in a condition in which it is impossible for him to act at all. His condition would be analogous to that of a vessel on a motionless sea, where not a breath of wind stirs the atmosphere. And, not only is it true that we cannot act without motives, but also that the greater the array of them actually before us, which prompts to any given act or course of action is, the greater is the likelihood that we will put forth

that act, or take that course. To deny this, would be to contradict all experience and all consciousness; and, accordingly, when we wish to induce any one to put forth any act or adopt any course to which he is strongly averse, we bring to bear upon him all the motives we can, thinking thereby to win him to the desired action. It is thus that all who endeavor to influence men, continually proceed.

Now, the sanctions of law are *motives*; rewards promised, on the one hand, to those who will obey its precept, and penalties threatened, on the other, to those who will disobey it. The power of the sanctions to allure to obedience and to deter from disobedience, consists precisely in the amount of good they set forth to be secured by the one, and of evil to be incurred by the other; that is, their power consists in their efficiency to excite *the hope of good, and the fear of evil*. The ultimate end for which moral beings were made, so far as themselves are concerned, is happiness; and their thirst for it is as intense as for existence. It is the goal to which they constantly look; the magnet that constantly attracts them; and *the hope of attaining it and the fear of losing it* are the two great pillars of the arch on which all law and all government rest. "*Do this, and you shall be rewarded; do that, and you shall be punished,*" is the voice of law forever resounding throughout the universe of God. Thus the sanctions of law are motives addressed to the hopes and fears of those for whom it exists, impelling them, by the regard they have for their happiness, to obey its precept. If the rewards promised are trivial, and the penalties threatened slight, the hopes excited and fears aroused will correspond, and their efficiency will of course be feeble; but if the rewards set forth are vast and the penalties tremendous, the hope and fear inspired will be proportional, and their efficiency commensurate. Since, therefore, obedience to the precept of the moral law naturally and certainly brings happiness in its train, and disobedience misery, it follows that the only way to promote happiness and prevent misery is to promote obedience and prevent disobedience; and, since moral agents always and only act in view of motives, and the efficiency of motives to influence them to obedience and to restrain them from disobedience, is precisely commensurate with the amount of good they set before the mind to be secured by the one, and of evil to be incurred by the other, it follows that the only way to promote obedience and to prevent disobedience

to the utmost, is, as much as possible, to increase the motives that lead to the one and that deter from the other, that excite hope and arouse fear; in other words, to make the consequences of obedience as alluring, and of disobedience as appalling as, in the nature of the case, is possible.

It seems necessary here to interpose a brief delay in the tenor of the argument, to show that, in the nature of the case, it is impossible to make the consequences of obedience alluring, and of disobedience appalling, beyond certain limits. In the first place, the rewards of virtue must, it is plain, be distributed to each one, found worthy to receive them, not only in proportion to the comparative degree of his worthiness, and of his capacity and fitness for them, but also in such kind and measure as will perfectly consist with all the just rights, immunities and privileges of every other one; or, in other words, with all the conditions of the highest possible well-being of all holy intelligences throughout the universe. When they are amplified to the full extent of these limitations, they are as vast and alluring as possible, because to swell them beyond, would be unjust, if practicable, and would really, on the whole, for that reason, diminish instead of increasing them. In the next place, it is equally plain, that the penal retributions of sin must never transcend in severity the actual guilt or ill-desert of each transgressor. In a perfect moral government, *distributive justice must be the STANDARD* by which penalties are denounced and awarded; that is, the penalties to be inflicted on each transgressor, must be in exact proportion to his guilt; and when they are thus graduated, they are just as appalling as possible. To swell them beyond this boundary would be unjust and arbitrary, and would, therefore, be to depart from, and assail, the very nature of moral government; and, as it could not but revolt the moral sense of all intelligent beings, and work the destruction of their confidence in the government, it is evident that, instead of augmenting, it would diminish, if not annihilate, their motive power in favor of virtue. Why, on the contrary, they should be fully up to this boundary, the whole drift of this argument demonstrates.

Now, returning to the argument, since God created all moral beings, and constituted them so that they can only obtain happiness and avoid misery by obeying the precept of the moral law, he must be considered bound by the nature of benevolence to do all he can, in the nature of the case, to secure their obedience

and thereby their happiness. If obedience naturally resulted in no good, and disobedience in no evil, to the actor and his fellow beings, both would be entirely indifferent; and it would be utterly preposterous to do anything whatever to secure the one or prevent the other. And if God had foreseen that the natural consequences, now known to issue from obedience and disobedience respectively, could have been so anticipated by moral agents, without experience, by means of Divine revelation or otherwise, as to prove sufficient, as motives, actually to secure universal obedience, there could have been no necessity for adding others; although even then such addition could have done no harm, and might have done some good. But the foresight by him of the commission of one single sin, by one single moral agent, no matter how early or late in the course of the ages, would create such a necessity; for, as facts demonstrate, one single sin contains in itself a potency for evil, adequate, if not counteracted by something immeasurably more influential than mere natural consequences, even when experienced, to ruin a universe. Not only does it produce an immediate experience of evil in him that perpetrates it, but it introduces into him a spring that urges him with amazing force to repeat, and to persevere in repeating it, which is itself again strengthened by every repetition, and all perseverance in it; so that, if left to himself, his career is downward from bad to worse forever. And besides this personal evil to the transgressor, it is powerfully contagious, and propagates itself from heart to heart, as a conflagration spreads from house to house in a compact and combustible city, finding no end till all are involved and all destroyed.

This potency of sin for evil, and the necessity that positive penalties, as severe as possible, should be added to its natural consequences, in order to conserve and promote, to the highest degree, the virtue and happiness of the universe of moral beings, arise from natural relations between, and natural tendencies in, such beings; and even a hasty consideration of these relations and tendencies will suffice to demonstrate the validity of the whole argument we are now urging.

Astronomy teaches us that each particular world, and each particular system of worlds, whatever peculiarities of magnitude, consistence, or special relations may characterize either, is but a part of the stupendous whole which we call the material universe; and that such is the importance of the general law which

connects each with all, and all with each, that if one single globe should, from any cause, disown that law and forsake its sphere, it would, if unrectified by Omnipotence, infallibly result in universal ruin. World after world, quitting its orbit, would rush amain into the interminable void of surrounding space, darkling and desolate forever, or dash impetuously against its fellows, crushing and crushed, till not one of all the countless host that now holds nature's concord, would remain uningulfed in the infinite disaster. So absolutely do the order, the harmony, and the perpetuity of the very constitution of universal nature depend on the uninterrupted and perfect reign of the great law of attraction over the motion of every globe and system in the vast society of worlds. In this majestic constitution of the material creation; in the mighty ties of relationship, interdependence, and reciprocal service, by which all the countless orbs and subordinate systems that compose it, are bound together and conserved in ever reigning harmony, we have a sublime symbol of that constitution and those ties by which every moral agent, existing and to exist throughout the unmeasured scene of things, however distinguished by idiosyncrasies, capabilities, or special relations, is connected with every other one, and constitutes a part of one stupendous, all-embracing community; and in the universal disaster which, if unprevented by Omnipotence, would ingulf the material creation, if one single globe, disowning the relation it sustains to its fellows, should rush lawless from its sphere, is also symbolized the infinite ruin which would infallibly result to the universe of intelligences, from the violation by one single one of them of the obligations by which the eternal law of morality binds them together in one mighty empire, if its tendencies were not arrested and restrained by the greatest possible augmentation of the motives that allure to obedience and that deter from disobedience. The very elements of the nature of moral agents which constitute them such, are, in their combinations, essentially instinct with intensely social tendencies. But for such tendencies, the only relation they could sustain to each other would be that of so many merely natural similarities. The numberless affinities which imply mutuality of interest, duty, or regard of any kind, could have no existence among them. Each would be and abide, roaming or resting, a consummate Stoic, an absolute solitary, the antitype of those savage beasts which forsake their kind and walk the wild alone. But one touch of

moral nature makes all its owners kin. However near, or severed by distant spheres; however much or little they have learned of each other; whatever special differences they know, or suppose, to exist between themselves; they cannot be indifferent to, they cannot but feel a fellowship for, and an interest in, each other; they cannot but contemplate each other as capable of the same happiness or misery, as having substantially the same attributes and susceptibilities, as mutually connected in the same great moral system, as subject to the same eternal law, and as owing each other unalloyed and perpetual good-will. Nay, so potent and prodigal are the social tendencies in them, that they spring forth into development towards even possible and fictitious existences, figured like themselves. Not even the deepest and direst depravity can entirely suppress and stifle them, except perhaps towards those whom it intensely hates. It is with admirable fidelity to this truth of nature that the great poet of Paradise Lost makes the arch-fiend himself have and express yearnings of sympathy for the primal pair of our race, at the very time that he was enviously contemplating their innocent joys, and fixedly meditating to blight them forever.

Involved in, and resulting from, this intensely social character of the nature of moral agents, is an amazing susceptibility of being influenced and moulded by what they witness or learn of the moral life of each other and its results — by each other's example and each other's experience; so that there is a natural and necessary moral connection of each with all, and all with each throughout the universe, and an equally natural and necessary dependence of each on all, and all on each for the realization and conservation, not only of the most perfect well-being of all and of each, but of any comparatively considerable degree of it. Thus the universe of intelligences is demonstrated to be one vitally connected *solidarity*, to use a recently imported term, one all-embracing, all-binding, all-interdependent, and all-inter-influencing empire. All this being true, it is easy to see the truth of the position advanced, that one single sin contains in itself a potency for evil, if not counteracted by something immeasurably more influential than mere natural consequences, even when experienced, to ruin a universe. How appalling this potency is, is shown by the fact that, notwithstanding all God has done to counteract it, all the depravity and misery that have invaded and darkened the universe, have issued from one primal

transgression. But for the restraining and counteracting measures the Infinite Sovereign has constantly arrayed against it, who can say to what extent it would have swept over and ravaged his creation ere this? Who can assure us that all would not have been engulfed ere now?

Although it may seem a "wasteful and ridiculous excess," we must call attention to another ground, found in natural tendencies of moral beings, for the same grand conclusion. As the end for which they were made, so far as themselves are concerned, is happiness, God has implanted in their constitution a demand for its realization as intense as for existence itself; and, as their social and moral tendencies impel them to set their hearts on and pursue the happiness of *all*, so their personal tendencies impel them to set their hearts on and pursue their own. It was the design of the Maker that these two tendencies should dwell and operate together in perpetual amity, and thus secure the highest universal and individual good. But they are capable of being divorced and arrayed against each other, and of thus producing universal disruption and anarchy. Not only this capability, but a limitless liability of its being exercised, necessarily belongs to moral agents. The danger is, not that their social tendencies will wrest and carry them away from the influence of the personal ones, and thus divorce them from due regard to their own happiness, although this is a possible case; but that the personal ones will wrest and carry them away from the just influence of the social ones, and thus divorce them from the regard they owe to the universal happiness. This danger is immeasurably great, and it arises from, and is founded in, the very constitution of their being as it came from their Maker's hands. Had they been so constituted as to be incapable of happiness, they could not have been moral beings, and could have sustained no moral or social relations to each other. As they could have had nothing for which to hope, nothing to fear, nothing to choose or desire, all objects and conditions must have been alike indifferent to them; existence itself could have had no value in their eyes. It is obvious, therefore, that it was necessary to constitute them so that they would naturally thirst for happiness as intensely as for existence itself, in order, first, that each of them might set the highest possible value on his own existence and the means and measures essential to its well-being; and, secondly, that he might have within himself an omnipotent standard by

which to value the existence and well-being of others throughout the universe. But, when we remember the following facts: 1. that, while each thus thirsts for his own happiness, his possession or want of it, is a direct personal experience, the master fact of his consciousness, the ever-present spring of his activity respecting himself; whereas, unaided by supernatural revelation or illustration, he can only know and realize the possession or want of it by others, even when he witnesses the manifestation by them of the one or the other, through the recognition of their common nature and the inference, however spontaneous, that it must be the same to them as to himself; 2. that the number of his fellow beings whom he can personally know, and whose happiness or misery he can personally witness and be directly affected by, must be exceedingly limited, even if his intelligence be of the utmost finite capacity; and 3. that God has recorded in his Word that holy beings did fall, which must have resulted, as the record more than intimates, and the nature of the case makes sure, from the influence of the personal tendency in them; we say, when we remember these facts, the conclusion we are compelled to draw from them is, that the force of the *natural* attraction, by which each moral agent is drawn to set his heart on and seek his own happiness, is necessarily greater than that by which he is drawn to set his heart on and seek the universal happiness. If this conclusion be valid, it is obvious that it furnishes an explanation altogether additional to that furnished by the fact of the intensely social nature of moral agents, why it is that the example of *selfishness* (i. e. of sin), once set, has such appalling potency to extend itself among them; and why it is necessary to array the strongest possible motives against it.

Taking, now, all the facts and principles and conclusions of this whole argument together, what do they constitute less than a moral demonstration that there is an absolute necessity, in order to conserve and promote the greatest possible amount of virtue and happiness in the universe, for adding motives in favor of virtue and against sin to those found in the natural consequences of each, and for adding as great ones as possible? The truth is, the more tremendous the natural consequences of sin are, so much the more urgent is the necessity that a positive moral government, with positive rewards and penalties should be instituted and administered; and the only way in which it is possible for any one to show that there is no necessity for such

a government, is, to show that sin produces no natural evil consequences whatever! Instead, therefore, of the fact that sin does produce such evil natural consequences, as we see, being any ground for concluding against the doctrine of positive penalties, additional to them, it compels the conclusion, not only that there must be such penalties, but that, if God is benevolent, they must be just as severe as possible. He, and he alone, can institute and administer a positive moral government for all his intelligent creatures; and this whole argument shows that, if he really wills their highest virtue and happiness, he must have done this; he must have added positive rewards and positive penalties to the natural consequences of obedience and disobedience; he must have made the penalties as severe as possible; and that, if he has not done this, his benevolence cannot be vindicated; he must be regardless of the welfare of his intelligent creatures.

III. We urge against this doctrine, in the next place, that, if it be true, God cannot be *just*. This position is already substantially established by what has been advanced under the preceding objection; but it seems important to give it some additional consideration and illustration.

The general idea of justice is, that *it consists in rendering to all their dues*. As an attribute, it is the disposition or will to do this; as an act or exercise, it is actually doing it. As it relates to government, this general idea of justice branches into two specific varieties. One of these is *distributive justice*. Its realization would consist in distributing to every subject of the government, such rewards or punishment as his conduct *deserves*. It respects exclusively the actual *merit or demerit* of each person, and deals with him accordingly. The other of the varieties is *public justice*. Its realization consists in protecting the rights and promoting the welfare of all the subjects of the government, by such legislation and such an administration of law as their highest good demands. The difference between these two species of justice is, that the latter demands the infliction of the penalties deserved by transgressors solely for the sake of protecting and promoting the highest good of the public; and hence, if that good can be secured as effectually in some other way, as by punishing the guilty, it dismisses its claims against them, and even demands that mercy shall extend them a pardon on condition of their return to obedience; while the former demands that the penalties deserved

by transgressors shall be inflicted on them, simply because they deserve them, and irrespective of the general good; and hence, it insists with relentless rigor that no pardon shall be extended, and no mercy shown, to the violator of the law in any instance, and that he shall suffer to the extreme of his ill-desert.

Now, that public justice cannot be satisfied, in other words, that the well-being of the intelligent universe cannot be secured and promoted to the highest possible degree, by any measure of punishment less than is demanded by distributive justice, is demonstrated by what we have already shown respecting the appalling potency of sin to propagate itself and its resulting misery throughout the universe, and respecting the consequent necessity that the strongest possible motives (i. e. legal sanctions) should be arrayed against it and in favor of virtue. While, therefore, *public justice* furnishes the grand and only imperative reason for the infliction of punishment, *distributive justice* must, in a perfect government, and of course in that of God, be, in every case, the *rule* or *measure* of the infliction. Hence, if sin deserves only its own natural consequences, public justice, if we can conceive it to exist at all in such a case, would require that these, and these only, should be endured by its perpetrator; but if, notwithstanding these, it deserves positive punishment, then public justice demands that its perpetrator shall be made to suffer it according to the measure of the ill-desert.

Are, then, the natural consequences of sin all that it deserves? Sure we are that neither conscience nor reason, to say nothing about revelation, answers this question in the affirmative. Sure we are that, when they beget in the guilty "a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries," it is by generating within them the conviction that they deserve a *positive* retribution from God. And sure we are that, when the guilty are writhing under this appalling conviction, it would give them great relief to be certified of its falseness, and that the natural consequences of their sin are alone to be feared. It is certain that some of these very consequences, and these among the most tormenting, consist precisely in, and result from, spontaneous anticipations of positive retribution, to be inflicted by God himself. This goes to prove, that it is an original, untaught affirmation or sentiment of the minds of moral agents, that sin deserves such retribution; and this is further proved by the fact that all human legislators, and governments,

and the mass of mankind, in every age and nation, have recognized the principle, as an unquestionable truth, in all their laws, their penal inflictions, and their manifestations of belief.

But, besides this, the nature of the case demonstrates that the natural consequences of sin are not all that it deserves. In order to see this, let us view it in the light of the relation to a human government, sustained by one who has committed crime. As a member of society, enjoying its protection and privileges, he owed it a life of social rectitude; of order, justice and good-will. By his crime, he has not only defrauded it of what he owed it, but he has done it direct injury by assailing its security and welfare. Now, to assert that the natural consequences of his crime are all that he deserves for it, is to assert that society has no *right* to punish him; for the necessary condition of inflicting punishment on any one, is, that he deserves it. If he does not, the infliction is not punishment, but injustice and outrage. Of course, then, society has no power to protect itself against future aggressions committed by him or by others, incited, it may be, by his example, even were its very existence at stake. Who can fail to see how utterly destructive of all government and all social order among men; how perfectly demoralizing, anarchical and pernicious; and how absolutely at war with the spontaneous sentiment and corresponding practice of mankind, this doctrine is, when considered simply as it applies to the relation of the perpetrator of crime to human society? And, on the contrary, who can fail to see, that, as a defrauder and injurer of society, he deserves punishment *from* it; that he deserves it according to the measure of what he knew, or might have known or supposed, to be his obligation to live a virtuous citizen; and that, therefore, society has the *right*, and is *bound*, to inflict on him such penalties as, in its best wisdom, it really believes, viewing his whole course as it may, its own welfare (i. e. public justice) demands? If all this be not so, the whole idea of justice is not only a dream, but one from the ivory gate.

Applying this, now, to the relation between all sinners and the government of God, we say it is all true in a transcendently higher sense; for all sin is crime against him and the universal society over which he presides. Whether crime does or does not deserve punishment from human government, for the same radical reasons — reasons, however, involving infinitely higher considerations — sin does or does not deserve punishment from

the Divine government. If the natural consequences of sin are all that the transgressor deserves, it is just as true respecting the one government as the other; and, as, if such be the fact, neither would have a right to inflict punishment, should either do so, it would of course be unjust and tyrannical.<sup>1</sup> But if crime, as a fraud and an outrage against the society embraced under a human government, renders its perpetrator deserving of punishment from it; and if he deserves it according to the measure already stated; for the same reasons, infinitely amplified, sin, as a fraud and an outrage against God and universal society, renders its perpetrator deserving of punishment from the Divine government; and the measure, according to which he deserves it, is the measure of what he knew, or might have known or supposed, to be his obligation to live a holy life. Consequently, if a human government has the right, and is bound, to inflict punishment on a criminal, as stated, seeing he deserves it; for the same reason, infinitely augmented, God has the *right*, and is *bound* by his own moral attributes, to inflict punishment on all unforgiven sinners, as the good of the universal society over which he presides (i. e. public justice), demands. We have omitted the word *positive*, before the word *punishment*, in this argument from the nature of the case, because governmental punishment is necessarily *positive*, and the very point of the argument is to show that sin deserves punishment from government, both human and Divine.

Now, as there is no evidence whatever that sin does *not* deserve positive punishment, what has been advanced in this whole argument, taken together, must be regarded as constituting a moral demonstration that it does, and that public justice (i. e. the welfare of universal society) demands, that, unless it can be satisfied in some other way, such punishment shall be inflicted on all sinners to the full measure of their ill-desert. And, as we presume no one will deny that it is *due* from God to moral beings, both as their Creator and as their Ruler, that he should do all that is, in the nature of the case, possible, to secure their well-being, we deem the conclusion inevitable that, if he has not

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<sup>1</sup> Logical consistency demands that the advocates of non-resistance and of freedom from all government, should accept this doctrine of natural consequences, and that the adherents of this doctrine should be advocates of non-resistance and of freedom from all government; for the radical principle is the same, and must apply to the Divine and human governments alike.

instituted a positive government, and has not attached to his law a positive penalty, as severe as strict distributive justice requires, but has left the mere natural consequences of sin to be the only evil results of sinning, it is impossible to vindicate his justice any more than his benevolence (he must be unjust, and if unjust at all, infinitely so), he has not done, and is not doing what is due from him to his creatures and subjects, to secure their well-being. "Sparing justice feeds iniquity."

Thus far we have said nothing respecting either the nature or duration of the punishment God will inflict on sinners. As to its nature, we wish to say nothing here; but as to its duration, we deem it important to append a few words. We hold, then, that, to be *just*, it must be *endless*. All our argument proves, that, if sin *deserves* endless punishment, both justice and benevolence demand its infliction on all sinners not saved by Christ. The question, then, is, "does sin deserve it?" and this question we answer in the affirmative. We believe this to be the doctrine of both *reason* and *revelation*. Omitting all proof from the latter, we invite attention to one mode in which it is established by the former. Suppose, then, one has committed an intended wrong, it matters not how grave or how slight, against another. Can he forthwith demand, *as his right*, that the wronged one, or any other one cognizant of the fact, shall regard and treat him as if he had not done the wrong? Can he assert that he deserves no retribution for the wrong? Can he do so the next day, or week, or month, or year? Will the lapse of any number of years, or myriads of ages, have the slightest effect to obliterate or diminish the guilt of that deed, or to restore the right it forfeited? We believe reason can only give an affirmative response to these questions. No lapse of time can have any tendency to destroy or impair the ill-desert of sin. No more can the endurance of any punishment which has an end. Neither the one, nor the other, can undo the act, or change its quality of ill-desert. Nor can repentance. Whatever punishment, therefore, he deserves at the moment of its commission, he necessarily deserves forever; and consequently, if he shall ever be restored to the favor of the wronged one, or of the wronged universe, or of God, the wronged Ruler of the universe, and treated by either of them as if he had not sinned, it must be by *grace and forgiveness* on their part, and not on the ground of justice. Distributive justice would treat him forever according to his guilt, and so must

public justice if he be not graciously forgiven. Nor is anything in the course of human governments which seems to conflict with this, any objection to what must be true in the government of God which is infinitely perfect. Hence, if God does not inflict perpetual punishment on all sinners who have not received grace through the atonement, he can be neither benevolent nor just.

IV. We urge against this doctrine, in the next place, that, if it be true, an atonement is impossible. An atonement, in the nature of the case, must be a governmental measure, and must relate to governmental ends and penalties. Its object and adaptation must be to secure and promote the grand end of public justice, at least, as fully as would the punishment of those for whom it is made; in other words, in its practical influence and effect on universal mind, it must be a complete *substitute* for the punishment due to sinners *from* the Divine government, in such a sense, that as many of them as avail themselves of it, according to the terms prescribed, can, in full accordance with the demands of public justice, be pardoned and restored to all the immunities and privileges of those who have never sinned. There can be no propitiation or expiation for sin which is not, in this sense, a perfect substitute for its punishment. Such a substitute, we believe the atonement of Christ to be. We believe that, in respect to those who avail themselves of it, it secures and promotes the grand end of public justice far more perfectly than their punishment could. It would do the same for all, if all would embrace it; and it is sincerely offered to all. God, therefore, is not only *just*, but infinitely *wise and benevolent* in providing it, and in pardoning sin on the ground of it; and for it, not the earth only, but the universe should resound with his praise.

But such a measure can only consist with a positive government and positive penalties; for it is plainly impossible in the nature of the case to make any kind of a substitute for the natural consequences of sin; just as impossible as it would be to make one for personal identity. Being *natural*, they can of course only be superseded or removed by destroying the *nature* of those who suffer them. How, then, would it be possible to substitute the sufferings of Christ for them? When triangles become circles, this may be done. But further; as an atonement is, in its very nature, a governmental measure, adopted to satisfy public justice instead of the punishment of those for whom

it is made; and as, if the doctrine of natural consequences be true, there is no government that can adopt such a measure, and no public justice that can be satisfied by it, or at all admit of it, it is of course among the most absolutely impossible things. The death of Christ could, therefore, at best, have been nothing more than that of a martyr; it must have been that of an impostor. Hence, logical consistency demands that all who adopt this theory, should, as most of them do, discard the doctrine of the cross, should incontinently denounce and spurn this theory as its deadly enemy, and in all its aspects an abomination.

V. Another objection to this doctrine is, that, if it be true, there can be no pardon or forgiveness of sin. Pardon consists in arresting and setting aside the deserved penalty of law. But, as the natural consequences of sin are necessary, to talk of arresting and setting them aside, is as absurd as to talk of arresting and setting aside the natural consequences of putting out an eye, fracturing a limb, or sinking in the midst of the sea beyond recovery. The advocates of this theory are therefore perfectly consistent, in rejecting, as they generally do, the doctrine of justification by faith. They can logically do nothing else. Pardon, forgiveness, justification, mercy, are all utterly unmeaning terms in their system, unless they define them, as one of them with whom we once conversed, defined forgiveness, to mean *reform!* *punishment*, on the same principle, would mean *making sinners sin on!* Absurd as these definitions are, they are the only ones the system admits; so that it subverts, not only the ideas, but the very language of Christianity. Indeed, the whole class of terms mentioned must be blotted from the vocabulary of the nations, and also the ideas they express from their minds, and new ones must be supplied in their room, before this sublime theory can hold full ascendancy over the world.

VI. Against this doctrine, we urge, in the next place, that its tendency is intrinsically *demoralizing*. By setting aside the doctrine of a positive moral government, it sweeps away, of course, all the motives it contains in its proffered rewards and threatened penalties, which deter from sin and prompt to virtue, leaving those only which are found in the seen or apprehended natural consequences of obedience and sin. Those left, are not worthy to be compared with those taken away, in power to excite hope and fear and consequently to urge moral agents to, and uphold them in, rectitude. Their estimate of the importance of

the precept of the Divine Law, and of obedience to it, must be proportionally lowered, and their conception of the evil of sin correspondingly defective. Their sense of responsibility; their fear of, and reverence for, God; their dread of his justice; their felt need of his mercy; and their appreciation of his benevolent regard for the welfare of his creatures, must all be diminished to suit the measure of this most narrow theory, as Milton's fallen angels shrunk from "their shapes immense," to "less than smallest dwarfs," to find a place in Pandemonium. What, then, can possibly result, if this doctrine gains general credence among men, but a fearful augmentation of irreligion, vice and crime? The virtue of such as are virtuous, must be weakened, and the depravity of such as are depraved, must find relief from restraint and be strengthened. Nor is this all. By setting aside, as it must, the doctrine of atonement with all its logical issues and implications, it also sweeps away all the motives contained in it and them, which restrain from sin and allure to piety; which, in the hands of the Divine Spirit, are the power of God and the wisdom of God for the renovation of the world. These removed, all that remains of Christ the Divine, is Christ the man with his teachings and example. Impotent indeed must his teachings and example prove, when thus dissevered from the fact of atonement and from the fact of a moral government, since, even when connected with these, their force is ineffectual with such multitudes; and the more impotent must they prove, after such dissociation, because by it God is removed from the nearness of a direct personal agency in rewarding and punishing, to the measureless distance of a mere Creator. Against the force of the attractions and impulses which propel our race to sin, they can only be as dikes of sand against the surges of the ocean, rolled up into mountains and driven on by all the strength of mightiest storms. Sooner, therefore, might we expect the ever-frozen regions of the Arctic zone to produce, amidst all their rigors, the various growths and fruits of the tropics, than this doctrine, universally believed or realized in fact, to conserve piety or virtue in our world. Nay, it is surcharged with a virus adequate to paralyze and subvert the rectitude of the angelic hosts and saints redeemed, in heaven itself, could they but give it credence.

VII. We finally object to this doctrine that, while, as the whole tenor of this Article shows, it has no basis whatever in reason or the nature of things, it has none in the Word of God.

Where does that Word say or intimate that the natural consequences of sin are the only punishment it will receive? Where does it say or intimate that, if sinners in hell should repent at any period in the future, they would of course, or at all, be from that time released from their sufferings? Where does it say or intimate that the reason they will suffer there endlessly, is because they will sin endlessly? It contains no such sayings or intimations any more than it contains the Papal dream of Purgatory. On the contrary, it teaches most explicitly that, in the future world, God will himself inflict positive punishment on the wicked; that it will be for the sin they committed in this life, "the deeds done in the body," and that it will be according to those deeds; i. e. it will be severe in proportion to the aggregate of each one's ill-desert. Whatever sin they may commit in the future state, during the progress of the ages, it gives not the slightest intimation whether he will inflict any additional punishment on them for it or not.

But, besides its manifold and various teachings to this effect, it informs us that, in this world, God has repeatedly inflicted positive punishment on the presumptuous or desperately wicked. The destruction of the old world by the flood; the overthrow of the cities of the plain; the plagues of Egypt, and the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea; the fire that went out from God and consumed so many of the Israelites in the wilderness; the swallowing up by the earth of Korah, Dathan and Abiram; the plague that followed, and cut off fourteen thousand and seven hundred; the destruction of the hosts of Sennacherib in one night; the falling dead of Ananias and Sapphira; and many other similar events recorded for our ensamples, are all instances of this kind. Respecting all these, we say, that, if a positive government and positive penalties are inconsistent with the benevolence of God, so were they; and, on the contrary, that, if they were consistent with his benevolence, so, for the same radical reasons infinitely augmented, are such a government and such penalties. It is certain that, if the natural consequences of sin are all it deserves, and all that public justice demands, such cases must be regarded as injustice and cruelty.

Such are our objections to this theory; and, deeming it unnecessary to recapitulate them, it only remains for us to add a few concluding suggestions.

In the first place, we wish to caution any one from inferring

from the course our argument has taken, that we think lightly of the natural consequences of sin. On the contrary, we think them terrible. No one, it is certain, has ever in the present state realized fully how heavy they must sit upon the soul, when their whole weight, unrelieved by a single diversion of mind, a single self-delusion, or the slightest obscuration of the nature and bearings of sin, shall rest down upon it in eternity. Who can tell us how much is really meant by the single word *remorse*, as it will then be understood, when it is remembered what a fearful significance it sometimes acquires, even in this life? Nor does the Bible speak of them lightly, but with many stern and frightful utterances. Nevertheless, appalling as they are, they are but the rudiments and preludes of that transcendently more tremendous retribution which God himself will inflict, when, at the behest both of infinite benevolence and infinite justice, "he will render to every man according to his works."

Nor does it require great discernment to see, that, if a positive punishment awaits the wicked in eternity, the natural consequences of sin will themselves, for that very reason, be proportionally more severe than if no such punishment is to be added to them. Indeed, if the latter supposition be true, they must prove comparatively trivial, and will be easily borne; so that to reject the doctrine of a positive punishment, is virtually to reject, in great part, and that far the most formidable, the doctrine of natural consequences itself. It is to reduce them to mere shadows of themselves. The reader will readily pardon us, if we here introduce the sixth of Wordsworth's Sonnets upon the punishment of death, in which this principle, as it relates to human government, is admirably set forth:

"Ye brood of conscience — Spectres! that frequent  
 The bad man's restless walk, and haunt his bed —  
 Fiends in your aspect, yet beneficent  
 In act, as hovering Angels when they spread  
 Their wings to guard the unconscious Innocent —  
 Slow be the Statutes of the land to share  
 A laxity that could not but impair  
 Your power to punish crime, and so prevent.  
 And ye, Beliefs! coiled serpent-like about  
 The adage on all tongues, 'Murder will out,'  
 How shall your ancient warnings work for good  
 In the full might they hitherto have shown,  
 If for deliberate shedder of man's blood  
 Survive not Judgment that requires his own!"

In the next place, we deem it important to say here, that, if it is inconsistent with the benevolence of God to inflict positive punishment for sin, it must, for the same essential reason, be inconsistent with it to connect by creation natural sufferings with violations of moral law. In the latter case, although the sufferings proceed from the nature of moral agents, and would do so if God were not, provided they could continue to exist; nevertheless he is their ultimate cause, as the Author of that nature, and is therefore as really responsible for them as he is in the former case. Consequently, as the objection, that it is inconsistent with the benevolence of God and unjust for him to inflict positive punishment for sin, can only be urged on the ground, consciously or unconsciously assumed, that benevolence and justice forbid that *he* should cause moral beings to suffer at all, it must be just as valid (or invalid), against creating them with such constitutions that, if they commit sin, it will naturally produce suffering; for he causes the suffering in the one case as really as in the other. Hence, if those who urge this objection wish to be consistent, we advise them to take the ground its principle demands, and the only one it admits, that God ought so to have constituted moral agents, that, do what they might, they would be happy; in other words, that he should have given them, not only no *moral* constitution, but no constitution at all; for a constitution must have laws, and if it have laws, to violate them must produce misery. Even brutes must suffer, if they violate the laws of their nature.

But, besides all this, this objection is forestalled by the consideration, that, neither in creating moral agents, nor in instituting and administering a positive government over them, does God aim at their misery, but at directly the opposite. To be capable of happiness, they must be *moral* agents; to be such, they must be free; to be free, they must be liable to sin; to sin, is to war against their own nature and universal well-being; and to war against these, renders it necessary for them to endure both the natural and the governmental consequences of so doing. These consequences are alike intrinsically adapted and ordained to restrain them from sin and to conserve and promote their virtue and happiness. If, in their freedom, they sin despite these, and thus involve themselves in their tormentings, the fault, most assuredly, can no more be charged against God, than the endurance by criminals of the penalties due to their crimes, can be

charged, as a fault, against the human government which inflicts them.

“Not man alone, all rationals, heav'n arms  
 With an illustrious, but tremendous pow'r  
 To counteract its own most gracious ends;  
 And this, of strict necessity, not choice:  
 That pow'r denied, men, angels, were no more  
 But passive engines, void of praise or blame.  
 A nature rational implies the pow'r  
 Of being blest, or wretched, as we please;  
 Else idle reason would have nought to do:  
 And he that would be barr'd capacity  
 Of pain, courts incapacity of bliss.”

Before closing, we wish to point to the bearing of all we have said, on the doctrine that punishment is *disciplinary*; a doctrine which rests on a basis cognate to that of the one we have been opposing, and is equally crude. Punishment (i. e. the governmental infliction of deserved penalties), is aimed exclusively, as we think has been made apparent, at protecting and upholding the universal or public good, which has been assailed and injured by those upon whom it is inflicted; and hence, just as much as that good requires, so much must they be punished, irrespective of any conceivable amendatory effect it may have on them. If, therefore, all the lost should, at some future period, repent and become as holy as the angels, it could have no effect whatever to release them from their sufferings, so far as they are the result of governmental penalties, however it might arrest or mitigate the natural consequences of their sin. To say that punishment is disciplinary, is really a contradiction in terms and in sense, and is virtually to say that God has no moral government; and to say this, is to stand in the presence-chamber of Atheism.