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ARTICLE I.

HOW SHOULD NATURAL ABILITY BE PREACHED?

God has given to creatures different kinds of ability, or ability to do different things. Reptiles have ability to creep, fishes to swim, birds to fly, quadrupeds to walk: Men have ability to think, to reason, to abstract and classify, to discourse, to discriminate between good and evil, to do good and evil, to love and hate.

The ability which creatures have by their nature, or what they are as creatures, is, strictly speaking, their natural ability. The word *natural* is applied in scripture (1 Cor. 2: 14,) to man as unrenewed; but it is now used tropically; in its proper meaning it defines what pertains to the make or constitution of beings—their nature, as we commonly say. The ability then which man has *as man*, that whereby he is recognised as man or human, is man's natural ability: ability to think, reason, discourse, distinguish between good and evil, etc., in short, to do whatever a human being as such can do by virtue of his having the human nature.

ARTICLE II.

POPULAR OBJECTIONS TO DIVINE GOODNESS FROM
THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL.

We desire in this Article to keep aloof from all mysticism and novel theories. We shall be satisfied to throw before our readers some plain thoughts to aid the inquiries of practical, Christian men.

The Bible assures us that God is good. This means that he is a kind and benevolent Being—rejoicing in the happiness of his creatures. But to this view of the divine character is objected the facts around us, and the objector demands in the outset why, if God desire the happiness of his creatures, does he allow any of them to be miserable? If he would prevent all evil, and cannot, where is his omnipotence? If he can prevent such evils, and does not, where is his goodness? We are not willing to leave this objection festering in the minds of any of our readers, and hence it will be the object of this Article to show that the existence of physical and moral evil in the world, is no valid argument against the benevolence of God. We say it is no *valid* argument against the divine benevolence. We readily concede, that on a first view, the existence of sin and suffering, under the reign of an Almighty Being, is adapted to raise a doubt, as to either his character or his providence. It would be difficult for one who had seen no other effects of God's power than the suffering he inflicts, to infer that God was good. As it would be difficult for a child, who had seen no other results of human law, than its punishments, to infer that law was a blessing.

Let a child be led from gallows to gallows—and from

prison to prison throughout this crime-stained land; let him everywhere see the pale, haggard faces of guilty, miserable felons, and listen to their tales of suffering and their denunciations of law and society at large; and, in the absence of all other knowledge on the subject, he would be likely to infer that he lived under a cruel and sanguinary government. When, however, he had learned that the safety of near thirty millions of the virtuous was protected by the just punishments inflicted through jails and penitentiaries, his conclusion would be different.

So a reasonable man cannot on account of the existence of sin and suffering in our world draw any safe inferences, until he inquire why the Deity allows these evils to occur. If they occur because God prefers them for their own sake, and under the instincts of his disposition, they certainly are painful tokens of divine malevolence. But if evils exist to prevent or remedy greater evils; or if suffering punish moral wrong, then these evils may be, as they doubtless are, the tokens of God's justice, purity, and benevolence.

A physician who is amputating a limb, may, while his knife and saw are followed by groan on groan, and shriek on shriek, nevertheless have a heart yearning with kindness, and the firmness with which he does violence to his natural sympathies, in executing a severe work of mercy, may be the *highest* token of his benevolence. The just judge who crushes down his sympathies as a man, to perform the noble office of a patriot, in sentencing a murderer to death, may by that act, which dooms him to the gallows, be exercising a benevolence which shall be felt in the more peaceful slumbers of half a million. We have now said enough to make it clear to any one who can think—and most of our readers can think—that the permission or in-

fiction of evil is not necessarily malevolent. We have given illustrations of the fact that the existence of evil, under a good government, may harmonise perfectly with the benevolence of that government.

Now we are prepared to inquire whether there may not be adequate reasons why the Almighty permits physical and moral evil to exist in our world. If there may be such reasons—and no one can show there are not—then we contend that we are bound logically to infer, that God has sufficient and benevolent reasons for all the evil which he tolerates. As there is nothing in the nature of an infinite mind to raise a presumption that he elects evils for his creatures of his own choice, and as we have seen that evils *may* be the necessary means of good, we contend *a priori* that we are forbidden—whether we can explain the cause of evils or not—to infer that these evils are inconsistent with the divine benevolence. With candid minds, the whole argument might be left at this point; for such minds would never presume that God had capriciously or carelessly afflicted his creatures.

But we have to do not alone with the doubts of good men, but with the cavils of the scoffer, and we wish to put it within the power of even young Christians to silence gainsayers.

Hence we proceed to show *how* the existence of natural evils *may* harmonise with the goodness of God.

I. *The natural evils in the world afford a proper and perpetual manifestation of the evil of sin and the divine displeasure against it.* If the ruler of the universe treated a sinful world with unmingled favor, and endowed its inhabitants with perfect happiness, it would be hard to infer the holiness of God. Hence, while God in Christ cherishes towards our race a yearning compassion, and while he has left in the world a thousand re-

lics of its original beauty and blessedness, he still remembers that it is a world of rebels, and he rightly marks his disapprobation of human guilt, by the care, disquiet, sickness, pains and bereavements of human life. The world, with its mingled sorrows and joys, blessings and judgments, is a habitation appropriate for beings guilty, but in a day of probation. If the evils of life were entire and universal, man would see none of that "goodness of God which leads to repentance." If the world were only filled with blessings, man would be slow to believe that God is angry with the wicked every day. Suffering here, as well as hereafter, is the penalty of a broken law, but not the whole penalty of the law. By the foretaste which God gives of suffering here, as a result of sin, he confirms a belief in, and realization of, his dread declaration, that "he that believeth not," in other worlds "shall be damned." If any say that God is careless as to the occurrence of sin, if any contend that he has a mawkish sympathy which will prevent his punishing sin in eternity, then, we point to the evils of the world, to sickness, sorrow, and death, and say, See in these an illustration of the fact that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." There is thus an eloquence in the natural evils which abound in the world, to prove and enforce the often contemned doctrine of human responsibility to law and penalty.

II. *Physical evils have their use in furnishing man with a practical experience of the nature of suffering.* The idea which a perfectly happy being could form of suffering as a penalty for sin, must be faint and impractical. The imagination would falter in its endeavors to picture a condition never experienced, and sensations which had never been felt. But God designs to arouse the apathy and alarm the presumption of

guilt, by denouncing a wrath to come; and the nature of this wrath to come, which man should *fear* and *flee*, is made impressive to his mind by the suffering which here attends guilt. Happy is he who, by experience of the evils which God here connects with sin, learns to apprehend and escape the eternal consequences of sin beyond the grave.

III. *The evils of this life have a beneficial tendency, to wean the heart of man from idolatry of the world.* Though a thousand facts assure us that earthly enjoyments are not designed to be man's chief good, yet we every day perceive that the world is made an idol, and as such is worshipped. We see millions sitting down as unconcernedly to the feast of life, as if it could be made perpetual.

Now, if it be a fact that in order to be eternally safe man *must* cherish a love to heaven stronger than his love of the world, then, his poverty, his pain, his prospect of death have a tendency to promote his highest good.

We will illustrate this by a fact which occurred in our own neighborhood. In the Highlands between the sources of the Hudson and Lake Ontario, in the depth of winter, two brothers were making a weary march of fourteen miles, on a bitter cold day, through a deep snow. One at last gave out with cold, numbness and fatigue, and said he would sit down and rest upon the snow. His brother knew that the torpor of which the weary one complained, would deepen to the sleep of death, unless they pressed on; and he warned his brother accordingly. But the tired man was too stupid with cold, and too anxious to rest, to heed the warning; and down he sat in the snow.

The more vigorous one, alarmed at his brother's peril, and finding all expostulation vain, took a switch

and began to scourge the drowsy man. His strongest words had failed, but the sting of the lash inspired sensibility.

The first effect was anger; the second, warmth; and the third, gratitude and progress. The brother's life was saved by subjecting him to the humiliation and pain of the lash. It was a severe measure; it required quick thought and moral firmness; but who will say it was not a wise and benevolent measure?

So in respect to the minor evils of this life. If, by weaning our hearts from the world, they lead us to avert the grand evil of eternal perdition, who will say that the sorrows of life are too many or too severe? We have a wilderness world to pass, to reach the better land. We are surrounded by the flowers and charmed by the water-falls, and stupefied by the fruits of this strange land; and we need the scourge of the Almighty to say: "Onward! onward!—this is not your rest!"

IV. *A fourth use of physical evil is to limit the excess of sin in the world.* In a pure state of being, moral agents abstain from sin of choice, but man needs to be restrained by violence. Though this is not a condition of perfect rewards and punishments, yet God so administers his providential government, as generally to connect sorrow with sin, and thus to cause the evils which follow crime to be a warning against the commission of crime.

"Thus fear of poverty tends to prevent idleness and waste; the apprehension of shame limits licentiousness; the writhings of conscience drive men into the path of rectitude; the hate which attends selfishness and malice, prompts to an external courtesy; and the diseases which rack the gourmand and the inebriate, read the world lectures in favor of temperance."*

* Paley.

It is well that it is so. To the lot of the gross sensualist, fall poverty, disgrace, disease, and madness. He has violated nature's laws, and all nature rises to put him down. But, suppose no misery clung to gluttony, intemperance, and debauchery; suppose the sensualist could riot in excess, without a twinge of pain, constituted as man is, would not gluttony, drunkenness, and licentiousness fill the earth? Would not all that is noble in intellect, and amiable in virtue, be suffocated in the stews of vice? Would not men, as a mass, severing every tie which connects them with angelic and immortal natures, lie down in their animalized degradation, to take their portion with the beasts that perish?

Well it is, that God has comprehended this fact in his legislation. Well it is, that God has so adapted man's physical constitution to the responsible soul which dwells within it, that when man gives reins to his appetites, he sends a pang to that soul. Misery thus becomes a beacon to warn man of his danger, and to hedge him up in the path of moral rectitude, charity, and godliness.

V. *Another kind design of natural evil is the moral discipline it affords.* It has been said by an eminent writer, that "the passive virtues, of all others the most severe and sublime, of all others, perhaps, the most acceptable to the Deity, would be excluded from a world in which goodness was always followed by happiness, and guilt by vice." We are kept in the world, not only to act beneficently on the world without, but to have our own moral natures perfected by the discipline to which we are subject. This is our moulding state for immortality; and if, by the grace of God, we are made the jewels of Christ, we are only jewels in the rough which require the friction of earth's cares, disappoint-

ments, sorrows, to polish us to be set in the crown of our Saviour. For a day of mortal life, it is not to us a question so important to ask, what we may enjoy in its brief space, as to inquire how its events may best prepare us for a purer bliss in the limitless day of our immortality. The decaying seed is developing the germ of future harvests, and so the events which wring the heart with anguish, may be moulding that heart to a happier life and holier joy in the future. As it is the crushed grape which gives the sparkling wine, so it is the broken heart which is a sacrifice acceptable to God.

Patience under trial; fortitude in suffering; firmness in temptation; meekness under hate; and charity to those who have no charity towards us,—these are the peculiar Christian graces which are cherished alone on earth. Angels feel the joys of love, and are resolute to obey the Divine command; but, having never tasted sorrow, nor been exposed to earth's temptations, they have never exercised patience, fortitude, nor meekness. Their mission is to act; ours to endure. Their language is praise; ours is prayer. The burden of their song is gratitude for exemption from evil. We shall strike a higher note. In Christ we have battled with sin and sorrow, and come off more than conquerors through Him that hath loved us.

To them, we may say:—

Ye saw of old, on chaos rise,
The lofty pillars of the skies;
Ye know where morn exulting springs,
And evening folds her drooping wings.
But I amid your choirs shall shine,
And all your knowledge shall be mine:
Ye on your harps must lean to hear
The strains which mine alone can bear.

Isaiah saw the Lord on a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Before him stood the seraphim, and this one cried to that one, and said: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." Where did these spirits of heaven find such development of God's glory on earth, except in those peculiar graces of the Spirit, which find their origin and development in a world of suffering?

So universal is this training of moral agents on earth by the discipline of sorrow, that "it became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." How many of the claimed virtues of Jesus, were comprehended in those passive ones of humility, trust, patience, meekness, and resistance to temptation? Upon whom did he himself in the Sermon on the Mount shower beatitudes, but on the lowly, the meek, the peaceful, the merciful, and the persecuted for righteousness' sake? "Count it all joy," says the apostle, "when ye fall into divers temptations,—or afflictions—for the trial of your faith worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope."

Man's rebellious appetites overcome, endow him with the virtue of temperance. Pains and perils, bravely met, endow him with fortitude. Opposition and reproach, kindly borne, give the grace of meekness. His weakness and ignorance give occasion to trust in God; and the sorrows of others enlist his sympathy and benevolence. Thus we see that some of the most precious graces of the Christian life have their source in the fountain of human tears.

But more than this. The Almighty not only develops the passive virtues by the afflictions which he sends, but

he often qualifies his servants for great active labour, by accustoming them first to endure. Moses was disciplined in the desert of Midian, as an exile, before he was appointed to lead Israel through the great and howling wilderness from Egypt to Canaan. Joseph was taught humility by exile and imprisonment, before he was clothed with the purple of authority and made the saviour of Israel and Egypt. David might have followed the evil example of Saul, had he not been schooled by adversity when he was chased like a hart upon the mountains. The sadness of the cross, and the shame of their flight may have been necessary to prepare the apostles for their courageous activity on the day of Pentecost.

Peter's tears of repentance over his fall, constituted a baptism to the holy and consistent life which he ever after exhibited. Saul of Tarsus needed the discipline of his blindness, and his dependence on the prayers of Ananias for restored vision, to inculcate a sense of dependence and humility upon one who was about to be made a chief apostle and model in the Church of God. Sorrow and temptation constitute the fire in which the fine gold is tried and prepared for the Master's use.

The tree in the thick forest and in the deep valley, girded by sheltering hills, may grow tall and graceful, but it is never hardy. The oak, in the open field, basking in the blazing sun, and swept by storm upon storm, thrusts its roots deeper and deeper into the earth, and knits the fibres of its giant branches with greater and greater firmness, until it can laugh at the gales of five hundred years, or rib a vessel that no ocean-waves can break.

We see, then, that in developing the graces of his people, and in training them for his work, God has great

use for the physical evils he sends; and hence, it is not wonderful that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. We are not to regard the day of trouble as a day of darkness. We are not to distrust the goodness of God, or sit down in despondency, and say: "Wo is me! I am undone!" We are to seek to develop new virtue, with higher trials; and then ask for what nobler work God is preparing us. We suppose that all the suffering in our world exists under the government of a good God, for wise and benevolent reasons.

It may, however, be objected that, while all are afflicted, few derive any real benefit from their afflictions. This is a fact; but the question is not, whether earth's sorrows are really profitable to those who suffer, but, whether these sorrows are designed and adapted to profit them. If any pervert what God designs as a means of good, into an occasion for murmuring discontent, or sullen despair, they must blame themselves, and not their Maker. And even if it were proved, which it can never be, that there are afflictions which have no tendency to benefit mankind, it would not, of course, follow that God sends these afflictions either in caprice or in malice. No man suffers more than he justly deserves; and if the infliction of just punishment on the guilty here, will benefit any part of his universe, or glorify the justice of God; then the largest wisdom and truest benevolence will harmonise with justice, while man suffers the penalty of sin.

And before we close this part of the discussion, we ought to say, that we are bound to refer a great portion of the afflictions of the world to man's own violation of the physical laws of his being; and hence the woes of earth are only to be ascribed to God, in the modified sense, that he does not by miracles prevent the evils

which man, in his own free agency, inflicts on himself or his fellows.

But here we are met by another objection which, perhaps, it is more difficult to remove. We have seen that suffering in our world has just and benevolent uses; but these uses all seem to grow out of the existence of sin. Suffering is the fruit of sin. It punishes sin. It prevents sin. It discloses the evils of sin. The primary evil, then, lies not in the suffering, but in the sin which occasions it. Sin is the cause, and suffering the effect.

Here, then, a caviller rises and says: *Why has God permitted sin itself to exist, and thus to occasion so much suffering?* If he *could* have prevented sin, and has not done it, how do we prove him to be holy and *benevolent*? If he *desired* to shut out sin, and was not able to do it, how can we have confidence in his *Almighty power*?

This objection we have stated fairly, in the clearest and strongest light in which it can be urged. We will not say that we are able to answer it, because it involves questions as to the nature of free agency and human dependence, which are beyond the comprehension of man.

Milton represents angels, lost in Pandemonium, as reasoning on

Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute.

He says, they

Found no end, in wandering mazes lost.

In all ages, not only the best instructed Christian theologians, but, also, the most philosophic heathen,—like Socrates, Plato, Cicero, and Aristotle—have speculated on the origin of sin, under the government of a good and omnipotent Deity, and often confused them-

selves and each other, and the world, by idle and profitless theories, which, after all, left the subject as obscure as before.

We do not design to furnish another example of this profitless speculation, by involving our readers and ourselves in metaphysical labyrinths, from which none can escape. But, in respect to an objection to truth, which finds its way to the most ordinary minds who think at all on religious subjects, we owe it to truth to state what may be known, and what is to be left among the secret things which belong to God. We cannot hope to solve all the difficulties which grow out of this subject. We have not any new theories to propose, and, perhaps, little light to impart. We shall be satisfied if we give the best response of the *Church* to the cavils of the skeptical.

It is proper here to remark that the mysteries which attach to the existence and perpetuity of moral evil in the world, are not difficulties which belong to Calvinistic theology alone, or to Christianity alone. They grow out of facts which none can question; facts that embarrass every religious system which admits the being and government of the Most High. They trouble all but Atheists; and Atheists have troubles enough of their own.

Thus it is a fact that, in our world, there has been for nearly six thousand years, a prevalence of sin. Man, wherever found, has been found disposed to evil, which manifested itself in impiety towards God, and selfishness, envy and malice towards man. Believing the Bible, we learn that angels, beings of a higher order than man, led the way in a course of sin, and for it, "are held under chains of darkness."

Another fact which we are compelled to believe, is, that God is omniscient, almighty, and good; and yet,

that he has created beings, with a perfect knowledge that they would sin; and that he has not, by the exercise of his almighty power, prevented the perpetuity of sin.

The question before us is, How can this existence of sin be reconciled with the holiness and the power of God? No one has ever been able, perhaps, perfectly, to clear up this subject. But thousands have attempted to elucidate it, and, for this purpose have originated the most erroneous theories.

Some have denied that sin is sin; have divested transgression of law of all moral turpitude. Some have degraded man to a mere machine, and thus released him from all responsibility for his acts. Some have adopted the opposite conclusion, and made man a being so entirely independent as to be beyond the control of God. Some have divested God of all fore-knowledge, and all power, and made him a mere spectator of evils which he deplures, but did not foresee, and could not prevent.

We do not choose to develop any doubtful theories on this subject, but to state some principles which we can all understand, and to remove some objections which many have felt.

I. *We have ample evidence that God is not the author of the sin which abounds in the world.* This is a dictate of reason, and a doctrine of our Confession of Faith. It savours of blasphemy to hint that a holy God has created the sin of the world; and such interpretation finds no corroboration in the teaching of the providence or word of God.

What does creation say? God has made man a moral being who feels responsibility to some law of right and wrong; whose moral sense stings with remorse when the law of right is violated; who feels a convic-

tion of responsibility and is agitated with fear under a consciousness of guilt; who experiences an emotion of pleasure when his conduct rises to his moral judgment. What is all this but an inscription on the very soul of man, that God is holy and loves holiness?

And, moreover, there is in every man a moral law, by which kindness, sincerity, forbearance, moderation, give a secret enjoyment, while selfishness, envy, jealousy, pride, anger, malice, and hate, breed self-dissatisfaction and disquiet. What is this but the will of a holy God, incorporated into the very elements of our being?

Again; industry, economy, self-control, temperance and charity, tend to wealth, competence, peace, and friendship; while idleness, excess, prodigality, and moroseness, tend to hunger, rags, and abandonment, What inference shall we draw from this, but that our Creator is a friend to holiness, and has inwrought into the constitution of things premiums for a life of virtue?

When we turn to the word of God, we find

(1.) That God claims to be holy, and says, "Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy." (2.) His law is holy, just, and good, forbidding all sin of every kind. (3.) He has proclaimed his holy law in a most solemn manner, and most clearly set before his creatures principles and motives leading to perfect rectitude. (4.) He has offered the most glorious and enduring rewards to a course of well-doing, and denounced the most fearful penalties against all sin. (5.) He solemnly affirms that he has no pleasure in transgressors; that he is angry with the wicked every day, and that it is his desire that man should turn and live. (6.) He has instituted the most sublime, costly, and various means to recover men back from the love, the practice, and the penalty of sin. (7.) He always charges sin upon man,

as man's own act. He says, "Thou hast destroyed *thyself*, but in me is thy help." "Return unto the Lord, for *thou* hast fallen by thine iniquities." "Your sins have withholden good things from you."

Now is it for a moment to be believed, that after all this, we are to regard God as the author, in any proper sense, of sin in the universe? Does he first originate sin; then forbid it; then hold his creatures responsible for it; then punish them eternally for that which they could not prevent? Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

We now remark that while it is obvious that God is not the author of the sin that is in the world, it is *equally clear that man is the author of his own sin.*

He has all the essential elements of that moral agency which makes him properly the responsible author of his own acts. He is conscious of freedom of choice. He knows that it is he himself which deliberates, ponders, chooses, and acts. He naturally, and hence necessarily, challenges praise for well doing, and feels guilt for his misdeeds.

He is conscious of no outward influence forcing him against his heart-preferences in his moral relations. He freely attaches praise or blame to the acts of others. In respect to every bad act, he is conscious that he might have done differently, and it is this consciousness of perfect liberty that gives him a sense of guilt. He often carries out his will in opposition to his instructed judgment, and against the declared will of God. He has an understanding to learn his duty, a conscience to approve, a will to choose, and a heart that might love it; and he *can form no idea* of a moral agency more *free, full, and responsible*, than that which he enjoys.

His judgment and conscience, as well as the verdict

of society and of the word of God, all unite in saying that his sinful acts are all, and properly, his own acts; that *he*, and he *alone*, is the author of his own sins.

So far, every thing seems to be plain. We find God holy and commanding holiness, but man, of his own free and guilty choice, a sinner. We therefore lay the guilt, where it belongs, at the door of man.

But now, an objector rises, and says: "The Almighty does not enact the sin, but why does he not prevent man from sinning?"

We have seen that God *has done* much to *prevent sin*. By creation, providence, his word and Spirit, he has resisted it, all of it, at every step, in every place. By conscience, by the fear of punishment, by evils which attend profligacy, he has arranged a thousand bolts and bars to shut out sin.

Sin is a moral evil: God has brought the entire energies of his moral government to exclude sin from his universe. He sets against sin the force of his example, his authority, his precepts, and his penalties. He has done, to hinder sin on earth, that which does, in fact, exclude it from heaven. He uses moral means to put down a moral evil.

But the objector says still: "In spite of these moral means to exclude sin, it still exists in the world. Why does not God, if he be holy and benevolent, use other and more efficient means to prevent sin? Why did he not interpose direct almighty power to prevent sin? Why does he not use almighty power at once to annihilate all sin?"

This objection supposes that it is possible and proper to employ direct Omnipotence, in a moral government, over free minds, just as it is employed for the regulation of trees, and plants, and flowers.

There is, no doubt, a sense in which God might have

prevented the origin of sin, but could he have prevented it, in a moral government over free minds, without invading the whole system of moral agency? Men, on earth, may be governed by a military despotism, as in Austria and Russia. But when a republic has been organized on the principles of universal liberty, as in these United States, then it will not do to interfere by despotic power. We cannot have the passive quiet of despotism united with the conscious freedom of republican institutions. The government of brute force in this land, we only apply to refractory little children, idiots, maniacs, felons in our penitentiaries and southern slaves. All others go in unrestrained natural liberty, to act as they please, but responsible for their acts to laws and penalties. Will any complain that God has not established the government of brute force in heaven, like that which we apply to beasts, maniacs, and felons? This would be like holding down air with a crow-bar.

We said that there is a sense in which God might have prevented sin in his universe, but let us inquire how that could have been done, and whether either wisdom or goodness would sanction it.

1. God could have prevented sin by refusing to *begin the work of creation*. Had there existed neither angels nor men, of course there would have been no rebellion in heaven, nor transgression on earth. But neither would there have existed in the universe, an emotion of love, a thrill of joy, an act of beneficence or a note of praise.

In such circumstances, the order of the universe would have been like the silence of a desert, on whose sands no beast ever presses a foot, and in whose skies no bird moves a wing. In this desert a burning sun on barren sands might tolerate no winds; but this is a poor boon,

if no tree spread its shade there, and no vine ascend its trellice there, and no flower shed its odor there, and no sensitive nature enjoy life there.

Foreseeing that a part of his creatures would sin and suffer, under a free, moral system, did wisdom and benevolence demand that God should stay his hand from creative energy, and leave his universe and eternity a solitude? No one is foolish enough to say that he ought not to have created.

2. God might have prevented sin among angels and men, by refusing to *endow any of his creatures with the attributes of moral agency*. Rivers, mountains, lakes, trees, grass and flowers never sin, and God, by limiting his creation to mere matter, would have made sin an impossibility. But who would arrest creation at such a point? Again, beasts, birds and fishes never sin, and the universe might have been left to teem with such alone. But would it have been perfect? Would it have reached the highest good which God was able to plan, and which his creatures might be made capable of enjoying? Who would desire to see the holy law of God in its action over free minds, give place to the universal and eternal rigor of a low, fixed, irresponsible animal instinct—too low for either vice or virtue, praise or blame? Who would desire to surrender the noble exercise of reason, conscience, and the affections, for the low pleasure of animal gratification?

3. Ought God to have prevented sin, by placing his creatures *out of the reach of external temptation*? What place could have been designated more pure than the celestial abode assigned to angels, and in which Lucifer, son of the morning, sinned and fell? And where on earth was a spot brighter and purer than the garden of Eden, where our first parents held intercourse, personal, frequent and joyous, with their Creator, and from which they exiled themselves and their race by sin?

And in respect of the world as it now is, would it minister to the probability of less sin, were any essential change effected in God's providential legislation? Should constant miracles occur to sever men from outward temptation, a depraved heart would still find occasion for transgression.

Man sins by indulgence of appetite and passion. Would it, hence, be proper to remove from his reach every blessing which he ought moderately to enjoy? Man idolizes the world. Would he be any more likely to love his Creator, if the world were made more dark and dreary?

In prosperity, man worships the creature; in adversity, he complains of his Maker, and starts doubts as to the divine goodness; and in both is like those addressed by the children sitting in the market and crying unto their fellows, "We have piped unto you and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented."

If we see angels sinning in heaven, and man sinning in all outward circumstances on earth, how can we infer that any outward circumstances will secure holiness against the influence of the heart? While the suspension of the general laws of God's providence to interfere by miracles to remove man's outward temptations, would annihilate all human experience, forecast, responsibility and enterprise, it cannot be shown that such changes would lessen the sin of a human being. They might change the form but not the reality of transgression. In other words, *it cannot be shown that God could providentially do more than he actually does, to prevent the sins of man, without effecting evils greater than those he cured.* He could prevent sin providentially by annihilating the being of every sinner, by transforming men to trees, beasts, and insects; but that he could leave man to ex-

ist on earth with all the powers of a moral agency, and in the appropriate circumstances of his being, and yet secure his holiness by any providential legislation, is yet to be shown. We have no doubt that God does, by his providence, all that he can wisely and justly do, to prevent sin, so that he is, in no proper sense, the author of the moral evils of earth.

But once more, the objector asks, Why does not God exert such an irresistible *internal influence on the heart of his creatures, as to prevent the possibility of sin?*

This question has been already, in part, answered. When it was determined to make man in God's image, intelligent, free, self-controlled by reason, conscious, and responsible to praise or blame for his acts, the very nature of such a being forbids that he should be controlled by direct influence on his heart. Were such a being, to be so governed by direct, almighty power, that it would be a natural impossibility for him to sin, then all the virtue of self-government, all ground of moral approbation, would be taken away. A being so governed by direct outward influence, would be an instrument, passive and imbecile, without virtue or vice.

But God made man in his own image; and this implies that, like God, he is made to act without physical constraint, by his own volition, under the teaching of truth, and the influence of motives.

No one will deny that such a nature, rational, free, responsible, immortal, is a noble endowment, worthy of the Being who formed us. We take it for granted, that with all the perils of a free agency, no one is sorry that he is a man and not a brute. We take it for granted that all will admit that in creating immortals for his own glory, God had a right to demand, that with a free will, they should freely cherish holiness instead of sin. And once more, we take it as self-evident, that

when God had originated a moral system, which assumed the voluntary obedience of his creatures to clear truth, plain duty, and high obligation, he could not be expected so to interfere with this system, by direct power, as to lessen the motives to obedience, or annihilate the very existence of personal virtue in his creatures. If we may so express it, God seems to cherish a profound reverence for the laws of that moral government which he has established. He proclaims his laws with clearness and solemnity. If he dispense with the infliction of a penalty, it is because an adequate substitute has been provided in the cross. If he interfere directly to change the heart, it is by a special agent, and by truth. If he forgive the sinner, it is the penitent sinner that comes in the name of Christ and by humble prayer.

All this shows that there is a difficulty in the direct interference by Almighty power to prevent sin. He can only wisely, justly, and benevolently prevent sin, by the moral means which he has adopted, in the hands of the Spirit, and by the coöperation of his providence.

But, says the objector, in spite of all God does, in his wisdom, goodness and power, some sin on, and are lost. This is true, and it is a sad and awful truth, that under the best plan of government which God could devise for his universe, some will sin and perish forever. But it does not follow from this, that God is either unjust or unkind. We are bound to believe that the present system has the fewest evils, and the largest benefits; that though some sin and will perish, yet that, on the whole, the present system is the best that could be devised. No one can prove that God could have devised a system of moral government which would have excluded sin, and yet produce as much happiness as will result from the present system in spite of sin. Under the best eco-

nomy possible, some will sin and perish; but as they sin freely, and without compulsion, and are punished no more than they deserve, their guilt and misery cannot be urged as evidence that God is not perfectly holy and benevolent. As no one sins but by choice, and no one suffers but by real ill desert, as the general results of a free moral system of government, the most glorious in the universe, the existence of evil is to be regarded but as the friction in a machinery of infinite love.

And as God makes the wrath of man to praise him; as the sins of the world have illustrated the goodness and justice of God in the cross of Christ, and furnished occasion for the development of the Almighty to his universe, we may cease to wonder why moral evil has been allowed to exist under the government of a benevolent and holy being.

ARTICLE III.

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S PLAN FOR INCREASING THE MINISTRY.*

Our Lord's parting command to his followers required them to preach the Gospel to every creature. Through his mediation the divine provision of redemption was complete; and all that was further necessary,

* We requested the Rev. Thornton A. Mills, D. D., the General Secretary of the Assembly's Committee on Education for the Ministry, to prepare an Article on that subject for our pages. Meanwhile, we made some remarks in the Review, No. XXIX, p. 117, which the Secretary did not suppose to be entirely just to him and the Committee. Not being able to modify those remarks, we have supposed it to be the best plan to throw open our pages to the Secretary, to state the whole matter as he deems best, he taking the sole responsibility of the Article.