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RETRIBUTION, IN RELATION TO THE JUSTICE, GOODNESS AND PURPOSE OF GOD.

IS eternal punishment consistent with the infinite justice of God? Is it compatible with his infinite goodness? Is it in keeping with his design in the creation of the world? The objections which are suggested by these questions are the most formidable ones with which the advocate of the orthodox doctrine of Retribution has to contend.

I. RETRIBUTION AND THE DIVINE JUSTICE.

Orthodox writers sometimes dispose of the Universalist's objection based on this attribute of God, by saying that since the Bible teaches eternal punishment, this doctrine must be compatible with God's justice. But this is hardly a fair way of dealing with the subject, for it might be rejoined: "Whether or not the Bible teaches the doctrine, is the issue in dispute. We claim that it does not teach it;—that the language alleged to teach it does not sustain the inferences based upon it;—that the contrary doctrine is implied in other passages of Scripture; and we are confirmed, moreover, in the belief that our exegesis is correct, by the view which we entertain respecting God as a just and good Being." There can be no valid objection to this reply, for it is plain that since the doctrine of retribution and the attributes of God are factors in the inquiry, it is possible for men to reason to opposite conclusions as they happen to regard one or the other as the known quantity. It is possible to argue that since God is a being of infinite justice, it is not likely that the Scriptures contain the doctrine of endless punishment—that

doctrine being, as some suppose, in conflict with this attribute; and it is possible to argue that it must be just for God to punish men eternally, since the Scriptures represent him as intending to inflict this penalty. A strong exegetical argument to the effect that endless punishment is taught in the Bible ought, it is true, to force the Universalist to give up his *à priori* objections; but it would be better and fairer to grapple with the objection by showing that it proceeds upon false assumptions. Besides, it will be easier to show that the Scriptures do teach the doctrine under discussion, if it can be shown that there is no antecedent objection to it in the admitted justice and goodness of God.

Now, when it is said that the endless punishment of sinners would be an act of injustice, the question emerges: What is justice?[1] It is doing right; but it is more than that. It is doing right in reference to another. It contemplates two parties: one the subject of the just feeling, the other the object of the just act. Justice is doing right, where doing wrong would be an injury to another. What is the measure of justice? It is law. Justice, then, is doing to another what law (*jus*) says must be done. It is easy to see how, as Austin remarks, the statement of Hobbes that there can be no such thing as an unjust law may be true. Justice being conformity to law, the law cannot be at once the measure of justice and itself unjust; that is, Austin says,[2] it is not possible that there should be such a thing as a legally unjust law; a law may be unwise, or immoral, or—as judged by a higher law, say the law of God—unjust. But when considered as the measure of justice, it cannot be open to the charge of injustice. This view of justice, recognized by jurists, throws light upon the question under discussion. Justice, as an attribute of God's nature, is a word which affirms that he acts according to law in his dealings with moral beings. The Scriptures are careful to tell us that God is just: he is not arbitrary or capricious. Whatever he does is done in accordance with law,—

[1] Cicero furnished a phrase for the jurists and theologians alike when he defined justice to be a disposition *suum cuique tribuendi*. In the Justinian code it is thus defined: *Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi*. This definition is adopted substantially by Turretin, Markius, Mastrict and Reformed theologians generally.

[2] Jurisprudence, p. 575.

and when it is said that God acts in accordance with law, it is meant that he acts in accordance with his own law ;—but God's law cannot be unjust, for there is no higher law with which it can be compared. If, then, as a matter of fact, God does punish men eternally, it is folly to say that God is unjust on that account : for he never acts capriciously, but in accordance with law ; and if the law of God calls for the punishment of the wicked, it is folly to say that it is an unjust law : for by what higher law is it to be judged ? It would seem like presumption to suggest an amendment to a Divine enactment. The only modest way of stating the objection under discussion would be to say that the law of God—or what is the same thing, the nature of God—does not call for the endless punishment of the wicked. Stating the case thus, the Universalist does not undertake to say that if the doctrine of eternal punishment were true, God would be unjust—a blasphemous and absurd form of expression ; he simply says : " The doctrine is not true, and I know it is not true because I know that it is repugnant to the nature of God." This, however, implies great familiarity with the Divine mind, and it is interesting to inquire whence this information is obtained. It may be said that the Bible describes God's character in terms which show plainly that the eternal punishment of men would be abhorrent to his nature. But this is not the case. The Bible says that God is good and full of compassion ; but one has no right to infer from this that the doctrine of eternal punishment is incompatible with God's character. The truth is that the Universalist's argument is mainly subjective, and when written in plain words, amounts simply to the statement that the doctrine of eternal punishment is untrue, because eternal punishment seems to him unjust. But if this is a safe method of reasoning, we may as well abandon our dependence on a Divine revelation, and Pope may well challenge us to

> " Snatch from his hand the balance and the rod,
> Rejudge his justice, be the God of God."

It will be said, in reply to this, that man was made in God's image. True ; but, by the terms of the Universalist's argument, God is made in man's image. Again, it will be asked :

What advantage is there in saying that God is just, if one does not know what justice means when it is predicated of God? But it is not known what justice means; it means acting according to law. Is there no advantage in knowing that? A man is involved in litigation; he says: "I do not know how the case will terminate, but I am certain that the judge will be just." God is just. Do the words convey no meaning, because we do not feel competent to say what God will do? The Judge of all the earth will do right. Suppose, however, that he should pronounce a sentence of eternal punishment upon all the impenitent, who will dispute the justice of the decision? Who will join issue on a point of equity with the Lord Chancellor of the Universe?

To give the subject the fullest attention, however, let the objection be considered more minutely. Men must have sound reasons for saying that the doctrine of eternal punishment is repugnant to the nature of God, and is contradicted by his justice. What are they? It is difficult to imagine more than two. It may be urged that the disadvantages under which men come into the world are such that it would be wrong to punish them eternally; and it may be said that the sins of which men are guilty do not assume a gravity which calls for such a penalty: in other words, that endless punishment is excessive punishment. These arguments deserve separate consideration.

1. It is easy to imagine a man giving expression to his objection in some such way as this: "I came into this world of sin by no choice of mine, was born of sinful parents, and by sheer force of circumstances was led into sin long before I knew the evil of it; and I am told that for sins which I could not otherwise than commit, I am liable to eternal punishment. Where would be the justice of such a punishment?" It must appear at a glance that if these disadvantageous circumstances are a valid argument against eternal punishment, they are an equally valid argument against any punishment whatever; for they are an argument against eternal punishment, only by being an argument against responsibility: "We could not help ourselves; therefore, we are not responsible; therefore, we ought not to be punished eternally;" therefore, we ought not to be punished at all,—it might with equal propriety be added.

But men are punished ; punishment in this world is palpable, and even those who deny the eternity of punishment, allow that some punishment will be inflicted in the next world. It would follow, too, from this objection, that the advent of sin among a race of moral beings can overthrow the moral government of God so far as that race is concerned : for a race, in order to be under moral government, must be under law ; and law means nothing, if it has no sanction ; it is a *brutum fulmen*, unless in the event of disobedience the lawgiver has power to punish. Sin, however, when it enters, will perpetuate itself ; and the law of heredity, by *placing* men in disadvantageous circumstances, will take away responsibility. Conceiving sin, therefore, to enter, as in the case of our first parents, the condition of things is such that God cannot punish it ; and if God cannot punish it, it is as though the race had not sinned, so far as legal consequences are concerned. A race of bad men, if the objection under notice is valid, would be as free from legal penalties as a race of good men. Though living in flagrant and shameless violation of God's law, the individuals of the race would be as safe from penal harm as though they never had sinned.

2. The next objection which might be urged, and which, indeed, is urged by Universalist writers, is that punishment would be excessive if it were endless. To this it may be replied that, being criminals themselves, it is not strange that men should take this view of the sentence pronounced upon them. Moreover, it is a noteworthy fact, that those who say that eternal punishment would be excessive, are not able to say what punishment would suffice. They allow (many do) that the punishments of the next world may be indefinitely protracted, and that they may last for years, or centuries, or cycles ; the only thing which they venture to affirm with confidence in regard to them is, that they will not last for ever. But when men confess so plainly that they do not know how much punishment sin deserves, how can they be so confident that it does not deserve endless punishment? They may say, of course, that punishment is disciplinary in design, and that, however long it lasts, the subject of it must be made happy in the end ; when they say this, however, they are not saying that endless punishment would be unjust, but that punishment being designed to make

the subject of it ultimately happy, it cannot be inflicted so as to make him endlessly miserable. (Eternal punishment, however, would be compatible with this view as to the end of punishment if it could be believed that the obduracy of men might defeat the purpose of God.)

That eternal punishment is not necessarily unjust, may appear from another argument. It must be evident, that if any sin deserves eternal punishment, every sin does. Since all sin is want of conformity to God's law, it follows that the difference between this and that sin is a difference of degree. If, therefore, a given sin deserves a finite punishment, then a greater sin would deserve a greater punishment in the ratio of its being a greater sin —that is to say, a finite punishment. If the punishment for this sin be represented by a period of finite duration, then the punishment of a slightly aggravated sin would be represented by a period of longer but still of finite duration, and so on. So that it might be argued that the punishment due for the most aggravated sin would be expressed in a period of finite duration, however protracted that might be. Were it otherwise, then it would follow that while sin *quâ* sin calls only for finite penalty, the difference between this sin and that calls for infinite penalty ; in other words, that while sin in essence may be measured in a finite duration of penalty, sin as to its accidents is possessed of a demerit which calls for a penalty of infinite duration.

If what has just been said is true, it is equally evident that if a particular sin does not merit endless punishment, no sin merits this punishment. Let it be assumed, then, that the greatest sin of which a man has been or can be guilty is deserving only of a definite punishment in time—a punishment measured by so many years or cycles. Then it follows that sin against God, even the greatest sin which a man can commit, is not the worst thing conceivable, for it is an evil, the exact measure of which can be computed in the figures of arithmetic. Let that punishment be protracted as long as you please, yet the moment the mind reaches in thought the time when the punishment expires, it will instinctively say : " Men might have done worse ; they might have deserved a still greater and more protracted punishment than that which they had deserved for sinning against God." This process of reflection is not an argument in proof of

eternal punishment; but it is enough to show that so far as God's attribute of justice is concerned, the antecedent and *à priori* difficulty is greater when punishment is regarded as finite than when it is considered as endless.

There is another consideration which should be urged at this point, and that is the self-perpetuating power of sin. The operation of this law in human life does not ordinarily provoke complaint. Men see the victims of immoral life go down to lower and yet lower levels. They say, "This is the law of nature;" but it never occurs to them to call in question the justice of the law. Arguing now on the basis of this self-perpetuating power of sin, it is not difficult to understand that punishment would not necessarily be unjust if it were eternal. For when the progress of the soul in sin and suffering in this world awakens in us no disposition to reproach the Author of our being, it would be unreasonable for us to raise the cry of injustice when the continuity of the soul's life is contemplated; and if the soul should go into the other world under the operation of this self-perpetuating law, the difficulty which the mind would encounter would not be that of supposing this state of things to continue forever; it would be the difficulty of supposing that this law should ever spend its force and become powerless. It is no answer to this argument to say, as objectors always say, that men are punished for the sins of this life. "This is true," as Dr. Hodge remarks; "nevertheless, it is also true, first, that sin in its nature is alienation and separation from God; and, as God is the source of all happiness, separation from him is of necessity the forfeiture of all good; secondly, that this separation is from its nature final, and consequently involves endless sinfulness and misery."[1] Eternal ruin is the necessary result of an unregenerated heart. To regard punishment as something deferred to a remote assize, is to miss the real significance of character. Our condition by nature is one of spiritual death, with concomitants of suffering; we are the subjects of a depraved nature, which not only has no power of self-regeneration, but which is constantly gravitating to a lower level of sin, and leading the way to a deeper abyss of suffering. This life is probationary, in the sense that it is the season during which the soul is to experience the regenerating

[1] Systematic Theology, vol. iii., p. 879.

influence of the Spirit of God, if it experience it at all. Limit the overtures of the Gospel to the present life, and of necessity the unregenerate soul is projected at death into an eternal career of sin and suffering.[1]

II. RETRIBUTION AND THE DIVINE GOODNESS.

The reverential skepticism of a man like John Foster, who, while admitting that the language of Scripture is formidably strong in favor of the doctrine of eternal punishment, acknowledges nevertheless that he is not convinced of the orthodox doctrine, is not only worthy of respect, but it is a skepticism of which more than one orthodox believer has at times been the subject,

[1] Witsius gives this doctrine its true logical place in systematic theology by discussing it prior to the discussion of the covenant of grace. The following quotation shows how he appreciated the argument for eternal punishment based on character, and, moreover, that he had faced the question of annihilation. What he says on the latter subject is interesting, as showing (what must be evident to any one who thinks on the subject) that while Restorationism is not at all compatible with the doctrine of a vicarious atonement and the other factors in the Calvinistic system, Annihilationism is, though of course it is unscriptural.

He says: Sed an aeternitas illa necessario debeat esse, in poena *sensus*; an vero satisfieri possit justitiae divinae per aeternam poenam *damni*, in annihilatione creaturae peccatricis, nescio an determinari queat. Hoc mihi videtur probabiliter satis et sobrie dici posse: Si Deo lubeat creaturam peccatricem aeternum in existentia conservare, necessum est (nulla satisfactione interc edente) ut eam aeternum puniat; poena non damni duntaxat sed et sensus. Ratio est, quia non modo peccati reatus semper remanet; sed et macula, qua peccatum semel commissum animam inficit, quaeque in eternum expurgari non potest, nisi sanguine Christi. Impossibile autem est, . . . ut Deus hominem peccato inquinatum ad sui communionem admittat. Porro fieri nequit, ut creatura rationalis, a communione favoris Divini exclusa, hanc indignationem Dei cum dolore maximo non sentiat. Conscientia dilapidati summi boni acerrimis flagellis miseros lancinat. . . . Sed an necesse sit ut Deus creaturam peccatricem eternum in existentia conservet, fateor me ignorare. Annon poena suo modo infinita censeri posset, si Deo luberet hominem natura sua eternitatis candidatum totali annihilationi addicere, unde retrogradi ad vitam nunquam liceret? Scio aliter nunc Deus disposuisse et id quidem justissime. Sed quaeritur, an non convenienter justitiae suae hoc modo disponere potuisset: si tu, ô homo, pecces, ego tuum eternae beatitatis atque beatae eternitatis appetitum frustrabor, teque ex adverso mancipabo eternae annihilationi. Liceat hic saltem *ἐπέχειν*.

Œcon. foed., Lib. I., Cap. V., §§ XLI., XLII.

when reflecting on the infinite goodness of God. In no spirit of controversy, therefore ; with no desire to champion a foregone conclusion, should a question which bears so terribly on the destiny of men be approached. It would be easy to quote passages which would show how Universalists are in the habit of stating the objection under consideration ; it is hoped, however, that no injustice will be done if their arguments are presented in our own words. This in substance is what they say : "Some men, it matters not how many, are doomed, you say, to eternal misery. God could have prevented the dawn of life ; he could have placed them in circumstances more favorable to the reception of truth : but as the case stands, their unfavorable circumstances work their ruin. God has saved some ;—you make a great deal of that to illustrate his goodness ;—but what would you think of the man who would save two men on a sinking vessel, and, with abundant means at his command, should leave the rest to perish? Yet this is virtually what you ask me to believe concerning God ; nay, you ask me to believe this and at the same time to regard him as my Father, and to feel assured that all we know of parental love is true of God, since he is the great Prototype of Fatherhood. Would I deal thus with my own child? Can I imagine the fountain of parental affection to be so dry that no responsive tears would follow the piteous cry of a suffering child? No, love would overleap all barriers ; it would let nothing stand in the way ;—and God, because he is love, will not allow his children to bear the torments of an endless penalty."

This is the argument. Is it as strong as it seems to be? Does it address the reason as powerfully as it impresses the feelings? There are two generic opinions among evangelical Christians respecting salvation. According to the one (the Arminian), the salvation of the soul is in the hands of the individual, since it hinges on compliance with certain conditions, full power to comply with these being presupposed ; according to the other (the Calvinistic), the salvation of the soul is in the hands of God : he elects, calls, justifies, and glorifies whom he will. The objection under notice is brought to bear on the Arminian scheme by asking why God should limit the blessings of grace by the performance of duties which he knew men would

neglect. It is brought to bear with even greater plausibility against the Calvinistic scheme by inquiring whether it is not more compatible with God's infinite goodness, to regard him as saving all men ;—particularly in view of the fact that, according to the Calvinistic belief, the vicarious atonement of Christ is sufficient for all, and the election of men is founded only on the sovereign pleasure of God.

To the objection founded on God's goodness, the reply may be made : (1) That in the exercise of benevolence, God acts according to his own good pleasure. (2) That the area of benevolence must be limited by the demands of justice.

Mr. John Stuart Mill [1] gives it as his opinion that " the only admissible moral theory of creation is that the Principle of Good *cannot* at once and altogether subdue the powers of evil, either physical or moral ;" in other words, Mr. Mill sees no way of defending the benevolence of God without denying his Omnipotence. But the fallacy of the argument lies in the epithet which is employed to characterize God's benevolence. It is assumed that because God is benevolent, he must be as benevolent as he can be ; that being infinite, he is infinitely benevolent, and that infinite benevolence is omni-benevolence.

It will be necessary to discuss this question with some care in the use of language. Like justice, goodness implies an act which terminates upon another. But, unlike justice, goodness does not imply conformity with a law or standard. A man who varied a hair's-breadth from the demands of law would be unjust ; but there is no standard by which goodness or benevolence can be measured so that this amount of good-will, or this amount of kindness, entitles a man to be called a benevolent man. Justice is essentially indiscriminating and impartial ; but a man may be both partial and discriminating in his benevolence —indeed, the men with whom the name of benevolence is most frequently associated are those who have turned their wealth or their energy in some favored channel of benevolence. The recognition of this distinction between justice and goodness as the attributes of men should pave the way for a similar recognition of their distinctness as attributes of God. God is bound to be just ; he is not bound to be generous. Men thank him

[1] Three Essays on Religion, p. 38.

for his goodness, but not for telling the truth. That the measure of God's benevolence is a matter of option and not of obligation, is taken for granted in the ordinary language that men use concerning him. It is felt that God might have left men to their fate without casting the least shadow on the purity of his own nature. And, if this is not so ;—if it is as easy to impute falsehood to God as to suppose that he would not interfere for the salvation of men ;—if the mission of Christ was a necessity, on the ground that the holiness of God and the stability of his throne were at stake : then will there not be some excuse for man if, when thanking God for his goodness to him, his soul rises to a contemplation of the moral catastrophe which would have ensued had God not come to his rescue, and the thought is suggested, "He dared not do otherwise"? The voluntariness of the divine goodness is a very essential factor in the contemplation of God's character ; and Dr. Bushnell taught a most pernicious error when he wrote upon the title-page of his book :—"The vicarious sacrifice grounded in principles of universal obligation."

If, now, it is allowed that in the exercise of his benevolence God acts according to his own good pleasure, one has no right to say how benevolent God will be, except on the authority of some special information. The bare epithet "benevolent" does not carry with it the exclusive significance which pertains to the word "just." In order to affirm with propriety that God wills the highest happiness of all his creatures because he is benevolent, it is necessary to add to the epithet "benevolent" another qualifying term ; accordingly, men who believe in the Universalist faith are in the habit of saying that since God is infinitely benevolent he must will the happiness of all his creatures. God is benevolent in electing some, they allow ; but—addressing Calvinists, they ask by way of objection—would he not have been more benevolent had he elected all ; and can that be infinite benevolence which shows itself in such a partial and discriminating manner?

The infinite benevolence of God may mean either a potentiality in God or an actuality in the universe. This distinction is important in this discussion, for it must be kept in mind that the objection to eternal punishment founded on God's goodness

is one which essays to drive the advocates of the orthodox doctrine to a denial of God's infinite benevolence. God, it is said, has chosen some to eternal life for no other reason than that he was benevolent; can he, however, be infinitely benevolent if he has chosen some and not all?—or, assuming the doctrine of election to be true—would he not have been more benevolent if he had chosen a greater number? The objection is clearly to the effect that a being of infinite benevolence must give expression to a benevolence which is infinite; or, in other words, that a being of infinite benevolence must be as benevolent as he can be. But what are the facts? The number of sentient beings in the universe is finite. God is not as benevolent as he can be so far as the number of those enjoying his goodness is concerned, for he could double that number. The benevolence of which sentient beings are the subjects is of various degrees. The benevolence of God might be manifested on a larger scale by bringing the lower grades of happiness up to the level of the highest. If infinite benevolence is that which cannot be increased, it is incompatible with gradations of happiness, and a dead level would be the logical outcome. The objects of God's benevolence differ in their capacities. A wide interval separates the foraminifera from the mollusk, the mollusk from the mastodon, the mastodon from man, man from his Maker. But if infinite benevolence must be so exercised as to forbid the question whether God might not have been more benevolent, are men not bound to say, and is not the Universalist forced to allow, that God is not infinitely benevolent? Again, if a limited capacity hold only a limited goodness, will the aggregate of limited capacities yield more than a finite quantity? And if what is finite is able to manifest only a goodness that is finite, is there any way for God to manifest—that is, to actualize—infinite goodness except by making an infinite being? So that the objection that God must be as good as he can be in order that he may be a being of infinite goodness, really means that God must manifest or actualize a goodness which is incapable of being increased—that is to say, infinite goodness; and this leads to the absurdity of saying that God must make an infinite being as the sphere in whom infinite goodness can be actualized before God is entitled to be called a being of infinite goodness. The ob-

jection, then, that God cannot be infinitely good or benevolent if he is discriminatingly and partially benevolent, must be given up, because it leads to absurd conclusions. In other words, men must treat God's goodness as they do his power, and regard it as an infinite potentiality in him, and not an infinity actualized in the universe.

So regarding it, however, the difficulty vanishes and the objection falls to the ground. There is enough in the universe to suggest the thought that God is infinite in goodness. It is not difficult to believe that God has resources enough in his nature to make glad a universe of sentient beings; that the pulsations of his heart are felt in Orion and the Pleiades; and that, after all, he could build another universe and sow the seeds of a wider harvest of happiness. Or reflecting only on his own blessings when he takes account of the correspondence between his corporal nature and the external world; when he considers how his senses are made tributary to his enjoyment; when he reflects on the capacities for increasing happiness with which he is furnished in his mental structure; when he remembers that God has endowed him with immortality, and has provided for the happiness of that immortal life by the sacrifice of his Son; when he remembers that his life is to continue without stagnation through all time, and that God's goodness is a fountain from which he is to draw eternal joy—it is not strange if he falls down upon his knees and thanks God for his infinite goodness. Nay, though he were the only object of this goodness in the wide universe, he should still thank him for his infinite love, and it would not occur to him to challenge the accuracy of the epithet because on reflection he discovered that God had not been as good to others as he had been to him. A line may be regarded as infinite without implying that it fills all space. The ocean may be fathomless, though its waters are walled in by the shores of two continents. And men, when they have dropped the sounding-line of their experience into the ocean of God's love, will not be deterred from proclaiming that it has no bottom because the waters of that ocean break against the beetling coast-line of the divine decrees.

It is only necessary to add one word in support of the proposition, that in the exercise of his benevolence God acts accord-

ing to his own good pleasure, and that word is a passage of Scripture which, taken in connection with its context, is a specific and unanswerable refutation of the objection which is under discussion. It is found in the ninth chapter of Romans, and is as follows: "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion."

It is not necessary to go beyond the words "even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight," in the attempt to find a satisfactory basis for a theodicy. The answer just given to the objection under consideration is an adequate answer; and yet it is not the only one which can be given. The fact that the area of benevolence is necessarily limited by the demands of justice may also furnish a very cogent argument in reply to the objection of the Universalist which is founded on the goodness of God. Let the objection be presented to the advocate of the Arminian scheme in the form of questions like the following: How is it that a God of infinite benevolence could offer to man a scheme of salvation burdened with conditions which he knew men would so generally fail to fulfil? Why did he not manifest his benevolence by an unconditioned salvation? The Arminian would very properly reply by saying that if these are proper questions it is proper to ask a question prior to them, viz.: Why, since God is a benevolent being, did he make man, at first, under a law which he knew he would violate? This, however, amounts to an inquiry by what right God set up a moral government; for a race of moral beings must be under law if they are under government, and a law is worthless if it has no sanctions. If, now, man, when sinless, was subject to penalty in case he disobeyed, it could hardly be expected that, having disobeyed, he would be redeemed without reference to any conditions; for then the fall would have been an advantage, since it would have been the occasion of a redemption which, being unconditioned, would allow man to sin with the largest license. It should not require much argument to show that the most effectual way of destroying the moral order of the world would be to issue a proclamation that, whatever happened, all men would be saved. Looking at the subject, therefore, from an Arminian point of view, there is no difficulty in supposing that the area of the divine goodness might very well have been limited by the demands of God's moral government.

But the Calvinistic thinker likewise has it in his power to reply to the Universalist's objection by an application of the principle under notice—the principle, to wit, that the area of benevolence is limited by the demands of justice.

Why, it is asked, does God limit himself to the election of some to eternal life, when the atonement was sufficient for all; and how is this compatible with his infinite goodness? One answer to this question has already been given and discussed. More, however, can be said. In regard to the destiny of men there are three possible hypotheses, assuming that God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass: 1. That none shall be saved. 2. That some shall be saved. 3. That all shall be saved. The first needs no attention. Let it be supposed that God had foreordained the salvation of all men and advised men of the fact. This would necessarily revolutionize all previously formed opinions concerning the Gospel, though from the standpoint of election it may seem that the only difference would be the substitution of the word "all" for the word "some;" the choice of a larger number than is generally believed to be comprehended in the decree of election. It would be impossible to say with any force, "Believe, and thou shalt be saved," since all men certainly would believe, as they had been informed that they would be saved. Christianity as an educational system—a system which influences men by presenting to their minds what from their point of view are contingencies—would be inoperative. It is true that God might work faith in all, regenerate all, sanctify all, as easily as he regenerates, justifies, and saves some: but he could not work this sanctification by reference to their hopes and fears, nor would there be any place in the Christian scheme for "conditions," and the word "if" would have no place in the vocabulary of the Gospel. Now, without being able to see *how* there is, it is not difficult to imagine *that* there is something in God's moral government which made necessary the preterition of some in order that (among other reasons) salvation might be wrought out in a life which, with proper caution and within limits, may be called a life of probation. The Westminster Confession of Faith says: "The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy as he pleaseth, for

the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by and to ordain them to dishonor and wrath for their sin, *to the praise of his glorious justice.*" The election of some and the preterition of others are here referred, in accordance with the teaching in the ninth chapter of Romans, to the sovereignty of God ; but is this truth incompatible with or exclusive of another idea which seems to be hinted at in the reference to "the praise of his glorious justice"? Is it clear that the exigencies of God's moral government were not such as to call for the punishment of some? Is it certain that when God passed by the rest of mankind he acted altogether upon the principle of sovereign election, and that there was nothing in the divine nature which made the punishment of some a necessary vindication of the majesty of law?

These questions should not be entertained for an instant, if they imply, in the remotest way, any disparagement of the work of Christ as a full satisfaction for sin, and sufficient for all. There are, however, many orthodox Christians who would find some relief in the contemplation of this dark problem if they could believe that some are lost not merely because God was not pleased to elect more or to elect all, but also because there may be some occult necessity in the economy of God for the punishment of some which even the death of Christ does not remove. Such a belief would not militate against the all-sufficiency of Christ's atonement, even though its efficacy would be restricted to the elect ; nor would this belief, moreover, conflict in the least with the truth already discussed in the foregoing pages in regard to the voluntary nature of God's benevolence ; since the election of any at all would be a sovereign election, and in the designation of those who should be the heirs of grace the discriminating character of God's benevolence would appear.

III. RETRIBUTION AND THE DIVINE PURPOSE.

"God," says Southwood Smith,[1] "is a being of perfect goodness. He created man with a design to make him happy. There is nothing in the universe capable of frustrating his de-

[1] Illustrations of the Divine Government, p. 179.

sign. However, therefore, that design may be opposed — through whatever long or painful discipline man may be conducted to happiness, he must finally attain it." The better way of dealing with the objection to the orthodox doctrine of retribution which is embodied in this quotation, is to institute an inquiry concerning the final cause of creation. Three prominent answers have been given to the question, Why did God create the world? The first is, that he could not help creating it; that it was as necessary for God to create as it is for the sun to shine. This view of God, it is needless to say, eliminates will and personality from his being, and leaves him little more than a blind force or the *anima mundi*. He is a dead God: he will not answer men if they pray: they may "roll the Psalm to wintry sky," but it falls upon no listening ear. Whether they call him the "Unknowable" with Herbert Spencer, or "a stream of tendency" with Matthew Arnold, it matters not; he is the "living God" no more.

The second answer is, that God made the world as an arena in which he might exercise his attribute of benevolence, and that the happiness of the creature is creation's final cause.

But though it were true that happiness is the final cause of at least the moral creation, it would not follow—as the writings of Dr. N. W. Taylor and others abundantly prove—that all men will be saved; for it would not be difficult to argue—as it has been argued—that the highest happiness of men can be attained only under a government which implies law and sanction on the one hand, and a free agent on the other; that sin is a contingency which God could not provide against, seeing he had determined to create a race of responsible beings; and that, therefore, the present order of things (including the everlasting punishment of the finally impenitent) is not incompatible with the idea that God intended the highest happiness of men. This view of God's moral government is not free from difficulties which may be regarded as insuperable, but it nevertheless furnishes an argument strong enough to overthrow the conclusion which the Universalist would draw from the proposition that happiness is the final cause of creation, supposing even

that the proposition were true. But there are very serious objections to this view of the matter.

1. It would lead to the conclusion that this is the best possible world. If God's end in creation is the happiness of the creature, it is not strange that men look on "Nature red in tooth and claw," and ask whether God is Almighty. One can hardly rise from the perusal of Mr. Mill's terrible indictment of nature, and say with much confidence that God made the world for the sake of making happy creatures.

2. It would follow that happiness would be the ground of moral obligation, since man could hardly be supposed to have a higher end for himself than God had for him. But as if to teach that happiness is not the chief end of man, it generally happens that those who seek happiness as an end signally fail, while "the mint of nature and of God," as a recent writer observes,[1] "has stamped happiness, pure and elevated happiness, on the obverse of every metal inscribed with the legend of self-devotion and self-control." Besides, it is an instinctive feeling that men ought to do right, though the heavens fall. The law of the moral nature is a "Categorical Imperative." It does not say: *If* you do this (you will be happy); but: Do this (whether you are happy or not). Moreover, the idea of obligation is incompatible with any system of eudæmonistic ethics. If honesty is the best policy, it is expedient to be honest; but that does not warrant the commanding a man to be honest. There is something greater than happiness as the aim of human life; and Augustine has given expression to the true instincts of the soul in the immortal words of his Confessions: "Fecisti nos ad te et inquietum est cor nostrum, donec requiescat in te.'

3. The view under consideration can have reference only to sentient beings, and does not explain why God made the material universe. Regarding man as a sinner and a wanderer from his Father's house, one may be willing to believe that God has hung out the lamps in the midnight sky to lead him back to heaven; but he can think of the material world as complete and glorious, though the sound of human voice or song of bird

[1] Jackson on Retribution, p. 82.

had not been known throughout the wide domain. A theory which would give proper place to the material world must be more comprehensive than one which can explain the use of that world only by supposing it to stand in some servile relationship to the happiness of sentient creatures.

This theory of the universe is therefore dismissed with the remark that if there may have been a higher end in the mind of God than the happiness of his creatures, that higher end, for aught that is known to the contrary, may not only be consistent with, but may call for, the eternal presence of evil in the universe.

The third answer to the question—Why God made the world—is that he made it for his own glory.

The common objection to this view is that it makes God a being of infinite vanity and selfishness. "What should we think," it is asked, "of a man who would live for his own glory, and who should make it the end and aim of his life to display his glory? Should we not say that he was vain and conceited?" The repeated statements of Scripture that God does act for his own glory should have prevented reverential minds from indulging in this line of remark; but a cursory survey of popular pulpit literature will disclose the fact that there is a sad willingness on the part of some ministers to make use of arguments in opposition to great scriptural truths, which arguments are as shallow and unphilosophical as they are dishonoring to God's word. Now glory is one thing and vain-glory is another. The poet who has succeeded in wedding to immortal verse the thoughts which have struggled to be free, has displayed his glory. He has expressed his better nature, and he can be accorded his meed of praise without the imputation of vanity. He is vain only when he bids for popular applause and solicits flattery. Such a man, it can be supposed, though conscious of the beauty and merit of his production, would not feel complimented by a child's expression of satisfaction. So when it is said that God acts for his own glory, it is not necessary to regard God as seeking the flatteries of men. He has not hung the art gallery of nature with his masterpieces in order that he may hide himself

behind them to listen to human flatteries, and drink in the compliments of tourists. And because self is not a proper centre around which man's acts should arrange themselves, it does not follow that self is not a proper centre around which the divine acts should move. Men should find the end of action out of themselves, for to live for God is a higher end than to live for themselves. But what higher end can God have than his own glory? If human duty takes its brightening way up to the throne of God, then what is the orbit within which the divine activity should move?

And though the analogy between God and man may fail when pushed too far, it is not difficult to illustrate the doctrine under discussion by reference to human experience. The artist may persevere in his profession because he dreams of wealth or hopes for an immortality in the memory of men. But you can imagine another laboring under the influence of a very different motive. He has a thought of what is true and beautiful and good, to which he wishes to give expression. This bright ideal visits him in his dreams; it flits before him and baffles his attempts to transfer it to the canvas. Day by day and night by night he works, until at last it is complete. His life, his history, as Madame de Staël observes, is in it; and as he gazes on the madonna it is not vanity which evokes the words of satisfaction: "It is very good." He did not paint the picture to expose it for sale in the world's markets; he did not paint it as a bid for popular applause; he painted it because the thought was in him, and though no human eye but his had ever seen it, he would have rejoiced in it nevertheless. And when this great universe which had been in God's thought from all eternity had been actualized in creation, it is not strange that the Creator's joy found vent in words, and that God pronounced it "very good." Without irreverence, one may think of God as a great artist enjoying the effect of light and shade and perspective in his wonderful pictures; as a great geometrician observing the harmony which pervades the universe and the even operation of the cosmic forces; as a great logician dividing existences into kinds and classes, and finding pleasure in a classification which,

from summum genus to infima species, knows no break and allows no gap.

And one can conceive, too, that God might look upon man as his masterpiece. For here it is that man fails. He has great power over matter ; he can combine and recombine its constituent elements ; but he stands baffled and disappointed in presence of the law which is formulated in the maxim : *omne vivum ex vivo.* He cannot make a living thing ; he cannot make a being like himself. But God can ; he has made man, and man is like him, for he was made in his image. Man is the choicest work of his hand—greater than the universe, says Pascal, though the universe might crush him : greater even then than the universe, for he would know that he was crushed. It was the triumph of art that the shield of Achilles was so complete a semblance of moving life, that (to use Mr. Gladstone's words in allusion to it) " the upturning earth, though wrought in metal, darkened as the plough went on, and the figures of the battle-piece dealt their strokes and parried them, and dragged out from the turmoil the bodies of their dead." [1] The triumph of divine art,—the masterpiece of divine workmanship,—is this moral world of movement, of thought, and feeling, and activity. Looking on the panorama of human history, men see what, from one point of view, is a series of contradictions ; but what from another point of view is plain enough. There is too much evidence of benevolence in nature for them to suppose that the world is in the hands of evil powers, or that God is a malevolent divinity. Yet there is too much truth in Mr. Mill's indictment of nature to make it easy for them to believe that the world was created with happiness as its final cause. Optimism and pessimism are alike excluded by a fair survey of facts ; but as in astronomy difficulty is avoided by adopting a heliocentric basis of calculation, so in theology difficulties are likely to disappear when men go out of man to find the final cause of his existence in God. And they can imagine that the present order of things does express the glory of the divine perfections as no other would. Even the advent of sin may have been a very important factor in

[1] Review of Lord Macaulay's Life.

the development of God's idea. Great thoughts have taken hold of the human mind as the result of its intrusion, which otherwise men may never have known. Two of these are law and love. Of law it is the judicious Hooker who says : " Her home is in the bosom of God, and her voice is the harmony of the world." But whether the majesty of law would have been so indelibly impressed upon the minds of moral beings had there been no sin and no salvation from its power, men dare not say. Love also occupies a prominent place in the list of great ideas. God is love ; but whether man would ever have known the love of God which passeth knowledge, had that love not been tested in a great moral crisis, is more than he can affirm. The mother loves, but does not know how much she loves until she understands how much she will endure for the sake of the idol of her heart. And without speculating as to the way in which humanity would have apprehended God had there been no sin, it is easy to see in sin the prelude to the Incarnation, and to view the Incarnation as a monument to the majesty of law and a tribute to the self-sacrificing nature of love. More than this, since pleasure is in great measure a matter of contrast, it may readily be believed that the trials of this life are afterwards to yield their rich results in enhancing the happiness of heaven.

Nay, one could almost go further, and hold that contrast may be a necessary factor in the divine economy, and that, for aught that is known, the eternity of evil finds some explanation here. It is here, however, that human sympathy is aroused, and would do violence to the laws of light and shade in order that the dream of a happy universe may be realized. Here, by the throne of the Almighty, is the point of highest light in God's great picture ; but as the light fades away into the deep darkness of the bottomless pit, men recoil and ask the artist to take away the shadows and flood the canvas with a golden glory. But how does the poet-painter of the Apocalypse handle the great theme of human destiny? He paints the river of life ; the throne of God ; the golden streets ; the white-robed throng ; and, as if to bring out the bright light of the picture, men see in shadow the place whose portals bear the dark inscription : " All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

And now that so much time has been spent in ridiculing the scholastic and patristic writers who, in language coarse it may be and grating to the ear, have spoken of the punishment of the lost as a factor in the happiness of the saints, would it not be well to stop and ask whether, after all, there may not be a profound philosophy in the speculation of Aquinas which finds some support in the science of æsthetics, and in the psychology of pleasure and pain?

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