

the argument. This objector cautions us to remember that man is a "free agent." Without this he could have been neither virtuous or vicious. To violate this agency would be to make man a machine; and this God cannot do. In the exercise of this agency man ruins himself; and it is no imputation upon God's goodness to say that man rushes to destruction in the face of all his calls to the contrary; and falls under a doom, which, however deplorable, is of his own procuring.

All this may be very clear to some minds. But to me I confess it is confusion worse confounded; and far enough from removing one fraction of the difficulty. How came man by that ungovernable and uncontrollable agency, upon which as a scape goat you would lay all the blame of endless perdition? Did it exist independently of God, and successively bafflo all his efforts to secure the good of his creatures? If so, God may be very good, but he is a weak and inefficient being, always at the control of an almighty agency.

But no, man has no other agency than what God gave him. If he could not make a free agent without running the fearful hazard of the endless ruin of those on whom he conferred it, why then a kind and good being would have made a machine, or anything else, rather than a free agent. If you say, God was under the necessity of creating man a free agent, or not creating him at all; why, then, he might have been kind in creating him, for out of two evils we have a right to presume that he chose the least. But instead of being a God, of all power and wisdom, he was the mere sport of an antecedent necessity, and had no attribute of an intelligent being, except the mere liberty of choosing between two courses, one or the other of which was forced upon him by that irresistible necessity.

The truth is, God was free to give or withhold this agency, and no good being would jeopard the immortal interests of myriads of intelligent beings for the sake of a theological abstraction like this. If he gave an agency which he could not control, the fault was with his wisdom or power. But if he can control that agency and make it a blessing to all, but *will not*, then we come back again to the old difficulty, from which we started, and impeach the infinity of his goodness. Turn which way you will, mystify the matter as you may, and still there is no evading the force of the truth, that the doctrine of endless misery, in any and all its forms and phases, and with whatever adjuncts it may be coupled, is utterly and forever opposed to the attributes of God as a being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness.

But I have not yet done; for no sooner have we established the truth of the utter repugnancy between the doctrine and the attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness, and driven the objector from every hiding place on that score, than another ground is taken. It may indeed be that we cannot see precisely how this doctrine harmonizes with these attributes of God; but ah! you forgot that God is just as well as good, and though his mercy may plead for sinners, yet stern justice must have its claims: and he'll with all its horrors will exalt and glorify God's justice as clearly as heaven his mercy and grace.

A remark here in the outset, that I have

but a poor opinion of any system of religion, that must support itself by "setting at odds heaven's jarring attributes," and making God a being divided against himself. I have before shown, that God's nature is love, and that all his attributes are but modes of manifestation, or operation of this great principle; and hence the perfect harmony of all his attributes. Stern justice, inflexible and relentless as it is usually thought to be, is but the justice of a God of love; and in its most rigid application, it never did, and never can inflict a single stripe more than infinite love and tender mercy shall approve.

Justice can offer no apology for cruelty, or for one line of departure from the most perfect goodness. The doctrine in question, therefore, if opposed to goodness, is precisely as much opposed to justice. But since compelled, we will examine a little further. Justice I take to be that principle which renders to every being that which is justly his right. One of the most clearly defined and sacred principles of justice I understand to be, that punishment shall in all cases be measured by the guilt of the offender. Justice would not punish a child, for stealing a toy, with the same severity that it would a man for highway robbery; for this would disregard the rule of just proportion between crime and its punishment. Now man is finite, limited in all his powers and capacities. His virtues are acknowledged to be, and his vices in degree by his own imperfect knowledge of good and ill. The doctrine of endless misery, which would inflict infinite woe upon a finite worm for the sins of a day, confounds all distinctions between crimes, disregards all ideas of proportion between crime and its punishment, and is therefore opposed to the very first principles of justice. So sure as there is a just God in the universe, so certainly will his justice forbid the idea of punishing any being with endless and unmitigated suffering.

So plainly is such a punishment at war with all ideas of justice, that of late even the abettors of the doctrine of endless misery, such as Dr. Beecher, Dr. Ely, and even the "Evangelist," the leading orthodox paper of New York, have scouted the idea, that a man is to be punished eternally, in the future world, for the sins of this life. That would be rank injustice they confess. But man, it is said, will continue to sin forever, and without end, and as long as he continues to sin, he will be punished; and hence, as Dr. Beecher has it, "eternal punishment will tread upon the heels of eternal transgression."

So, then, because a man sins in this world and suffers for it, he must of necessity be sentenced to hell, there to sin say a hundred years, and because he sins during that hundred years, he must atone for it by sinning another hundred, and so on, *ad infinitum*. And this is justice. As if it were not enough that man had sinned all the days of his life in this world; so he must needs be apprenticed to the Devil, and taught to sin with a still higher hand in the future world; and that in the way to satisfy the demands of that same justice, whose laws were outraged by the sins of the present! Truly such views as these have little fellowship with any known and acknowledged principles of justice.

But again; justice is, as we said, that

principle of right which gives to every being that which is properly his own. It should be remembered, that God has some just claims upon the children of men. He has a right to the love and obedience of all his creatures. Hence he says, "My son, give me thy heart." This is his right, and in strict justice he claims and demands it as his own. It is clear, therefore, that the justice of God requires the holiness and consequent happiness of all intelligences, and justice will never be done fully until the whole creation shall be brought to bow in meek submission before the throne of the Eternal, and render unto him that which is most justly his, all honor and glory, thanksgiving and adoration. And yet this very justice is arrayed by men against the enforcement of heaven's claims, and alleged as proof that the Devil will succeed in robbing heaven of half of its inhabitants, the Savior of his victory, and God of his children. Yea, even God's justice is offered as proof, that millions of the human family will resist the just claims of heaven, withhold from God what is rightfully his own, and forever blaspheme his name, and trample upon every principle of justice in the universe. Is there any justice in eternal rebellion against God? None at all. Then such a doctrine is evidently opposed to the attribute of justice.

The misfortune is, that men in this day seem to overlook everything but what may be called penal justice. Thus a man sins, and God punishes him, and in that simple fact men see the justice of God. Now I confess I see no justice in that simple fact alone. The veriest tyrant that ever lived would punish the transgressor; and the history of the world will bear witness, that those ruthless tyrants who have most outrageously violated all justice and right, have been most prompt to punish. It is not, therefore, the simple and isolated fact that God punishes the sinner, in which we are to behold his justice. Cruelty, revenge, or tyranny would do the same. But the foundations of justice lie further back than this. When a man sins, he commits an act of injustice. He withholds from God that which is his due, obedience.—Why does God punish him? Not simply retrospectively, because he has sinned; for revenge or cruelty would do that; but prospectively, to enforce the claims of justice, and induce the sinner to render unto God what he has a right to claim. I therefore see the justice of God, not so much in the simple fact that he punishes man for disobedience, as in the antecedent fact, that his claim upon man for obedience is just and right; and that his punishments are wisely and graciously modified, and designed to enforce that righteous claim.

But it is too easy to see that so soon as punishment loses sight of that claim, or ceases to be designed to enforce the obligation of obedience, that moment it loses the character of justice, and becomes revengeful, vindictive or cruel. Now the doctrine of endless misery closes its eyes entirely upon the fact, that justice requires all men to obey God, which is the very foundation of all justice; for if man was not bound to obey God, which is the very foundation of all justice; for if man was not bound to obey God, which is the very foundation of all justice; and it makes punishment, instead of an agent for procuring justice, the very means of defeating all its claims. It may, indeed, say, "thou shalt render obedience to God," but in an awkward attempt to en-

force obedience to that command, it puts out of the power of its subject over to obey God, or do jus ico, and thus it effectually defeats the primo object of all punishment, and violates that sacred principles of justice on which the very right to punish is founded.

The right of a parent, and the only right he has to punish a child, is founded upon the fact, that the parent has a just claim upon the obedience. Without that claim would be usurpation and tyranny.—The stranger might chastise your children, the usurper might punish the people, but it would not be justice; for I repeat once more, "all right to punish is founded upon the antecedent and just obligation of obedience." The moment punishment loses sight of that fact, it ceases to be founded in justice. The parent who punishes his child as to prevent him from rendering obedience; the legislator who punishes a criminal as to prevent him from rendering just obedience to the State, subverts the very foundations of all justice. And so I say, the doctrine that overlooks the great truth that man owes obedience to God, and so punishes him as to preclude the possibility of his ever fulfilling that obligation, is utterly and forever at war with justice, and engaged in a desperate struggle to defeat her claims. Such is the doctrine of endless misery. It robs God of his glory, and of his children; it declares that man shall never render obedience to the just and righteous claims of HEAVEN; its authority is usurpation; its punishments, revenge and wrath; and it crimson the altar, and pollutes the temple of justice with the blood of victims slain by the sword of oppression and cruelty.

Conscious, therefore, that I stand upon a rock which cannot be moved, and that I speak in accordance with those eternal principles of right, which are "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever," I pronounce the doctrine of endless woe, not merely unjust, but vindictive and cruel.

That the doctrine in question is opposed to the attribute of mercy, is made clearly manifest; for it has no mercy to exercise even upon those that call for it through eternity, with bitter groans and tears.—Whether, therefore, we consider God's nature as one, and that one, the spirit of love; or, whether we contemplate it in the various modifications called attributes, it is plain that the doctrine we have been considering, has no fellowship with God, and, of course it cannot be true.

There is one more idea, and I shall relieve you from this attention. Men are said, in the Scriptures, to become partakers of the divine nature, through faith in the promises of the Gospel. It need scarcely be repeated, that the nature of God is love, and that we become partakers of the divine nature just in proportion as we imbibe the spirit of love. Hence, the Apostle says, "He that dwelleth in Love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, for God is love." Now the idea to which I invite your attention, is this: Just in proportion as men become partakers of the divine nature, do they become opposed to the spirit of the doctrine in question. The hard-hearted, the vindictive, the revengeful, and the cruel, delight to dwell upon the torments of hell. A bloody Nero may be supposed to