

Those instances of pleasure and pain that are instances of reward and punishment, administered by a moral governor for actions regarded as virtuous or vicious, are those that are produced by acts subsequent to the vicious or virtuous acts,—namely, by the act of our own reviewing conscience, or by the act of a human, or Divine, Governor. But those instances of pleasure, which are immediately attendant on actions that may be subsequently punished; and those instances of pain that are connected with actions, that may be rewarded at a future time; are those which constitute the present state, a state of probation.

What proof of obedience to God, could our first parents have shown, by abstaining from the forbidden fruit, if it were not "pleasant to the eyes" and "good for food?" If it were evidently nauseous to the taste, and poisonous to the blood, the refraining from it would, probably, be an act of self-love merely, not an exercise and manifestation of love to God. But to be called to obey God, when obedience requires self-denial, and especially when it requires (as, since the fall of Adam, it does require), toil and suffering,—is to be called to act from love to God, as a principle distinct from, and superior to, love to self. The full adoption and cultivation of that superior principle could make us consistent and steadfast commandment-keepers, in any circumstances in this world, or in that which is to come.

Hence the design of many of the pains and pleasures of the present world is to constitute a system of probation, for the very purpose of exercising, strengthening, and confirming, the principle of love to God; that, as it ought, it may ever be stronger than love to any or to all things else. Fully under its influence, we would not barter the approving and sympathising smile of God, for the possession of any of the allurements, or for freedom from any of the sufferings, of this present time.

In short, the not keeping steadily in view, the distinctions between the sufferings belonging to the state of probation, and those pertaining to the beginnings of a system of punishment; has occasioned some dangerous misconceptions of both systems. And this, perhaps more than anything else, has prevented Arminians from discovering the proper exposition of the part of the 8th chapter of Romans now before us.