

shall it stand there defaced, mutilated, dishonored? Or, has it always been whole, honored, by receiving the Lord's day when the seventh day was recalled?

But the foregoing we regard as only the negative part of the argument, — a reply to three modern authors on this subject, whose writings and views we have quoted, and whose citations from the fathers we have considered. There is a positive side.

(To be continued.)

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#### ARTICLE IV.

##### THE NATURE AND OBJECT OF PENALTY.

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THIS subject will appear to many to be simple and easily handled, and there are authors whose statements and reasoning proceed upon that idea. There are, indeed, general definitions that can readily be adduced, and there are certain related ideas which are in everybody's mind. Penalty, it may be said, is some form of suffering inflicted by those in authority because of an infraction of law. Theologians refer to it as the punishment which God justly inflicts upon those who commit sin. But when we go below the surface, and inquire into the relationships of penalty, we find ourselves compelled to consider fundamental questions concerning justice, benevolence, law, and government. And the matter is the more complicated because law and government assume so many forms, physical and moral, parental, civil, and divine. And, to increase the difficulty, the course of divine providence and the declarations of Scripture bring to our notice a remedial as well as a purely legal system of government, to which penalty sustains some relation.

Penalty being an instrumentality of moral government, intended to aid in securing its special objects, it is necessary

that we should have clear ideas as to the nature of moral government. Three things may be said to enter into it fundamentally. *First*, it is the control of moral beings in respects which bear upon the production of character and happiness. Moral beings are those who are capable of right and wrong conduct, and thus of moral character; who have those powers and susceptibilities which make possible holiness and sin. We do not attach moral character to material substance, nor yet to the lower orders of animal existence which manifest certain degrees of intelligence. This is because the nature is wanting to which morality pertains. What enters into that nature? Reason, sensibility, and will. There must be the faculty of reason in its higher form: that which takes note of moral distinctions; that which apprehends the imperial idea of right as an intuitive and necessary truth,—a truth depending on no will, yet implying an obligation resting upon all will, and back of which, in its simplicity, it is impossible to go. A being incapable of conceiving the eternal distinction between right and wrong cannot be a subject of moral government. He would have no conception of responsibility for conduct.

But reason alone will not suffice as a foundation for moral action. There must be sensibility also; or a capacity of enjoyment. A being naturally incapable of happiness is incapable of moral character, being incapable of exercising love. For while the mind recognizes the abstract idea of right as necessary and ultimate, it also recognizes love as its concrete or practical form, its true realization. Love is *the* right, as a matter of fact—is that which everywhere, in all circumstances, and forever fills out fully the idea of right. So reason affirms; so the Bible declares in such passages as, “God is love”; “He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law”; “Love is the fulfilling of the law”; “Charity (or love) is the bond of perfectness”; “By love serve one another; for all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”; and in the affirmation of the Saviour, made after quoting the commands to love God

with all the heart, and one's neighbor as one's self, "On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." If, then, any one demands of the Bible or of his own reason a practical synonyme for right, the answer is love. But love, or benevolence, is the choice of universal happiness or well-being (including that of God and his universe), so far as it is in the power of the individual to promote it. Yet this cannot be chosen except the mind have an idea of its reality and value; and this is possible only by the possession of sensibility as a part of one's own nature; since happiness is purely a phenomenon in the sphere of the sensibility, and could not even be conceived of in idea by one whose nature did not embrace sensibility as well as reason. Such a being could no more love, that is, act with reference to happiness in himself and in others, than one born blind could judge of paintings, or one born deaf could judge of music. But with this constitutional capacity for pleasurable and painful feeling, by reason of which all objects are so presented to him as to appeal to desire or to aversion, there arises a motive-power of infinite variety of form and degree. Having, then, reason and sensibility, a moral agent needs further the power of choice, which shall act in the light of the other two faculties, the one of which shall give him the motives which come from intuitions of the moral sense, and the other those which come from the idea of happiness. Deprived of free-will, made merely the drift-wood on the strong current of passion, or actuated necessarily by impressed ideas, as by a kind of instinct, he would be devoid of responsibility, and no subject of moral government.

*Secondly*, moral government involves the control of moral beings by rightful authority in the person of a ruler. They are not left to themselves, even when equipped with the three-fold nature above described. They are supposed to be controlled; to be brought into a social system, which has its aims and methods; to be subjected to the authority of one who administers the system for the highest good of those who compose it. In other words, a superior will, conceived to be

wisdom, love, and power, is at the head, governing, influencing, controlling. In so doing, he throws a positive, personal weight into the scale, as the expression of a firm purpose, a set determination on his part to secure the great object of government. This object is not merely a matter of general interest and inherent merit, appealing for itself to the minds of all; but it is a personal and official matter between the ruler and the subjects of this government. He is at the head of government for the express purpose of making his resources tell on the carrying out of that object. Moral government means authority.

*Thirdly*, a grand instrumentality which enters into moral government is law, with its commands and sanctions. Authority does more than instruct and advise: it distinctly and characteristically commands. And, that the command may have the more emphasis and weight, it is backed by rewards and penalties. This is according to the necessary idea and method of governing moral agents; which cannot be done by direct physical force, as when one controls the motions of matter. Everything must be dealt with according to its nature; and mind, being rational, sensitive, and free, must be influenced by motives drawn from reason and sensibility, and which furnish occasion for the choice of the agent as against all necessitating power. Hence, back of law, as the authoritative utterance of the highest reason, must stand retribution as an appeal also to sensibility. It would then appear that, as to its general idea or nature, penalty is suffering inflicted by a ruler to maintain the authority of law, and thus to provide for the success of moral government. We may then specify the following direct uses of penalty.

1. It operates to instruct. Law is light. It gives information to ignorance. Emanating from superior wisdom, it expresses both the mind and will of an intelligent and benevolent ruler. By the precept given or the prohibition uttered it teaches the subject what the ruler regards as duty in the specific case to which it applies, and what he intends by his authority to enforce. Furthermore, it impresses a sense of

the importance of the precept by the character of the penalty annexed to its violation ; a light penalty signifying a less harmful offence, and a severer penalty one of more injurious nature. Thus, when a theft is punished with a year's imprisonment, and a murder with the loss of life, it is plainly taught that to take life is a more flagrant outrage than to take property, while both are stamped as evil. In like manner, where the issue is so broad as to involve not merely the rights of an individual, but those of the whole community, and the authority and existence of the government itself, the crime is visited with the highest penalty which the lawgiver can inflict. Hence, in all lands treason has been punishable with death—a fact which taught the people that the preservation of rightful civil government was fundamental to all interests, and that no one could be allowed to attack it but at his greatest peril. This fact has a bearing on the proper penalty of the divine law. It would seem to indicate that so far forth as sin is committed against clear light, and implies settled purpose of antagonism to divine authority, it is simply treason against the government of God, and deserves therefore the highest form of punishment.

2. Penalty also operates as motive to prevent transgression of law. It is intended to forewarn, and therefore is published with the precept which it guards. Its motive-power is manifold, since it makes appeal of various kinds, to the reason and to the sensibility. To the reason it appeals through its instructive quality, just noticed ; bringing up the imperial idea of right, and the value of interests to be protected, and thus urging one to obey from the highest class of motives. In addition, it reaches the sensibility, by promising good as the reward of obedience, and threatening evil as the penalty for disobedience. This is not an unworthy appeal—one made to the merely selfish character ; as though one were urged to act only from considerations of personal advantage. It is superadded, as we have seen, to the considerations based on the ideas of reason and conscience, and brings forward the regard which one may properly and must in-

stinctively have for his own welfare. The capacity for happiness belongs to the constitution of our being, and is of fundamental importance. Wisely and rightfully, then, does penalty caution one on this side of his nature, and bid him avoid that which will involve him in loss and harm, and do that which will bring desired good. Still further, penalty makes a mixed appeal to both reason and sensibility, in that it gives special prominence to the personal wish and earnestness of the ruler or lawgiver who emphasizes the precept, and adds his own authority; thus bringing into play all one's sentiments of reverence, admiration, faith, and gratitude, in view of the ruler's character and acts. In so far as penalty reveals a wise and benevolent ruler's mind and heart it powerfully tends to restrain the subject from transgression; for personal influence is often the most potential. When, then, we see that penalty leads one to consider the moral quality of a proposed act, its bearing upon the future happiness of the agent, and its relation to the character and personal wishes and purposes of the ruler, we cannot doubt that its dissuasive power must be great, even in the case of the virtuous, who might seem to need its influence slightly, if at all. It acts plainly as a needed counterbalance to temptation, which obscures the reason, inflames the sensibility, and ignores the ruler. The same reasoning which would go to show that virtue has no need of law with its penalty, and cannot be influenced by the latter, would equally prove the absurdity that virtue cannot be tempted; for penalty and temptation stand over against each other, as the two sides of the same faculties in man.

3. Penalty serves to vindicate the ruler and to sustain government upon occasion of transgression. It is obvious, that the fact of disobedience to law puts the ruler to a test of his character in respect to justice and firmness. On the one hand, the transgression is, by implication, a denial of his authority and an aspersion of the justice of the law. Its principle carried out would annul law and dethrone the ruler. By necessary consequence it would destroy what

government seeks to protect, and would leave the public good unguarded, a prey to the assaults of selfishness, which means general anarchy and ruin. This is the very crisis which penalty was intended to meet. It is a breakwater against an inundation. Here applies the oft-quoted answer of the English judge to the criminal, who complained of the severity of the penalty pronounced upon him for stealing a single sheep: "You are not punished merely for stealing a sheep; but you are punished that sheep may not be stolen." His theft opened in the entire realm the sluices of dishonesty, which only a severe penalty could close. It had a plain relation to the welfare of the whole community. When inflicted, penalty vindicates the ruler from any appearance of indifference to the public welfare, and from any such breach of faith as would be involved in an unwillingness to make good his threat of evil against the transgressor. Hence, though his compassion may be great for the criminal, on whom the penalty will come with crushing force, his regard for his office, for the demands of justice, for the imperilled good of the community, will operate, under a strictly legal system, to make him inexorable in the infliction of punishment. This conduct will greatly strengthen his authority, and limit future disobedience, while maintaining his own sense of integrity. This result is the more certain because there is a strong sense of justice, and a corresponding satisfaction at its administration, in the breast of the subject as well as of the ruler. Without entering into disputation respecting the abstract nature of justice, and whether it be in idea independent of benevolence, let it suffice that whatever may be the origin of the demand for it that demand is found deep in the human soul. When a crime is duly punished there is sense of relief and of satisfaction in every well-balanced mind, whether the fact arise from an increased sense of personal and public safety or from an original impulse to link suffering to sin. It is not revenge; it has in it no purely malign element; it is simply man's intelligent and moral nature demanding of the ruler that he perform his fundamental duty.

4. Now comes the much debated question, Whether penalty is designed to be reformatory? Does it aim not only to vindicate law and authority before the public, but also to reclaim the criminal and to make him in the future a virtuous subject? Men are commonly inclined to answer in the affirmative; partly because of the promptings of compassion, and the benevolent desire of a directly good result, and partly because such an end is had in view in what we call punishment, in the family, in the school, and in civil government. The parent punishes the disobedient child, that the child may henceforth become obedient. The teacher, in like manner, punishes the refractory pupil, partly that the pupil may in the future comply with the rules; though he has also in view the good order and moral training of the whole school. And so the human ruler imprisons a thief for one or three or five years, not only to deter others from stealing, but also in the hope that when the man is released he will no longer act the thief. But these facts do not decide the case. For when we look at the matter in the light of a merely legal system administered on the principle of pure justice, it is difficult to see that penalty directly contemplates reformation. If it did, it could never be definite and unconditional, as civil penalties are. It would be limited in time by the possibility of a speedy, and even of an immediate, repentance of the offender, which by securing this reformatory aim of the penalty might call for its immediate removal. Or, in other cases, it would possibly require an indefinitely extended time; since the man might remain unreformed at the expiration of a definite sentence. Besides, the supposed analogy of civil government fails us in another respect, in that a part of its penalties plainly have no reference to reformation, thus showing that where opportunity for it is given, such a result is incidental and subordinate rather than direct and primary. For where the penalty is death, or imprisonment for life, or even for such a long term of years as will nearly consume the remainder of the criminal's life, it is evident that the intent of the law is not at all his reformation, but the preser-



vation of governmental authority, and the intimidation of others who may be tempted to similar infractions of law. To seek the reformation of a criminal is a benevolent and wise act; but it is an act of favor and grace, and not of penalty. It would seem to belong to a totally different department of thought and aim, and to a course of action which is extra-legal, and requires safeguards to prevent it from entirely overthrowing the majesty of law and the authority of the ruler. It is temporary commutation, so to speak, of a degree of penal evil into chastisement; the ruler consenting for the time being to be a father or a teacher disciplining children. This can only take place under a gracious system, where penalty is really suspended, where moral change is hopeful, and where the singular incongruity of mixed or imperfect character is possible. Such is the condition of things under the divine government on this earth; as may be inferred from the facts of human history, and as is expressly declared in the Scriptures. This shows that we are liable to be misled by the analogies of parental and other human government, which all occur in the arrangements which God has introduced into a gracious and remedial system; the family, the school, the civil community entering as instrumentalities into the divine plan of mercy to a lost race.

There remains yet another important question connected with the nature of penalty, to wit, whether it consists of evil inflicted in addition to the natural consequences of transgression. There are those who insist that the only divine penalties are the evils that inevitably flow from sin; which carries with it its own punishment, in the shame, remorse, detestation by others, discord, disappointment, and exclusion from good inherent in holiness which necessarily follow. These consequences are regarded as specially introduced by God into the moral system, and made a natural, self-executing law, which thus affords an indication of his character and a certainty and impartiality of retribution, without any further positive action on his part. This conception is

thought not only to be simple and satisfactory, but to be in strict analogy with physical laws and their penalties, and thus to preserve the unity of the divine system. But here arise the significant questions: Whether there is a true analogy in this respect between physical and moral laws? and Whether necessary consequences are in reality penalties? As regards the question of analogy, do we not borrow terms from moral law, and apply them figuratively to physical law, and then become deceived by our own rhetoric? The idea of law as applied to the two spheres is totally different. A moral law is a command addressed to moral agents who may, and often do, refuse compliance. A physical law is a mode of action impressed upon matter, and from which it cannot depart, either of its own power or by that of any created being. It may therefore be affirmed that a physical law cannot be violated, except as God should undo his own work. When did an atom of matter violate the law of gravity; that is, cease for an instant to be subject to its full influence? Never. Other forces may have come in, and overpowered the result produced by gravity, which yet exerted its full power according to its nature, and therefore was truly obeyed. When a man falls carelessly from a precipice or into a fire he in no wise violates physical law, but only the moral law of prudence. Physical law is simply obeyed in his being dashed to pieces or burned to ashes. It would be a violation of physical law if any different result followed, unless by an interposed action of other physical forces; and therefore some theologians call miracles violations of natural laws. Hence it is merely popular, figurative speech, which in certain circumstances talks of the violation of physical law, and of the penalty which it inflicts in such case. We call it penalty when the consequence happens to be inconvenient to us, and to have been occasioned by our ignorance, willfulness, or carelessness; but not otherwise. One puts his hand thoughtlessly against a hot stove, instantly withdraws the blistered flesh, and in his pain rhetorically says that he has paid the penalty of violated physical law. He

has done no such thing. On the contrary, he has but obeyed or submitted to physical law, which has had its way with his flesh. The law of heat is to produce precisely that effect upon flesh, and knowing that fact, the same person, a little after, places a piece of beef in the oven of the same stove, that by the law of heat it may be roasted. In the latter case you do not hear him talk of violating physical law, and receiving its penalty in the form of roast beef! Perhaps the most common instance of this loose and popular modern speaking is in connection with health and disease. We are told that health is the reward of obedience to physical law, and that disease is the penalty paid for disobedience to it. This is true in one sense, but the idea is not expressed with philosophic accuracy. In reality, both health and disease are results strictly in accord with physical law—the one as much so as the other. In neither case is *that* law violated; in both it is strictly obeyed. But when a man observes the moral law of prudence and temperance as to eating, drinking, and other physical acts he will gain from the strict operation of physical law results desirable to his personal happiness, while if he violates the moral law he will find that in obedience to the same physical law his body will give him an experience of unpleasant results. One might as well talk of a physical law being violated when gunpowder is carelessly exploded, and a man loses his life. The chemical law is simply observed in such a case; the only law broken is that of wisdom and caution. Thus, strictly speaking, physical law has neither violations nor penalties, and from the nature of the case it cannot have. Hence no principle can be derived from it to be carried forward into the case of moral law. The fancied analogy does not exist, and the words and phrases supposed to imply it have been rhetorically and unscientifically borrowed from the moral sphere!

Confining ourselves, then, to the moral sphere, we next inquire whether a strictly necessary mental consequence is a penalty when it brings unhappiness to the doer of a wrong act? To obtain an affirmative answer, we must first

show that such a consequence was purposely attached to the act by the will of the ruler, in order to sustain the authority of moral law ; that, having power to order the constitution of the moral realm otherwise, he created it as it is, to the intent that transgression might have a just punishment in these inevitable consequences. But this principle of judgment would seem to lead to a negative answer of our question ; since these inevitable natural evil consequences of disobedience would appear to follow not by a special divine arrangement for moral ends, but by an involved necessity in the nature of mind itself. It is difficult to see how a moral being could be created without liability to such consequences. These would seem to flow not from a distinct divine purpose to punish sin, but from the necessity of the case, if God created mind at all. If he made a moral agent, it was necessary that the latter have power of thought, feeling, and will ; and equally that he be capable of the happy and unhappy experiences which necessarily flow from holiness and sin : the former could not exist without the latter. Given a rational, sensitive, and voluntary nature, there needed to be no additional divine act, as that of a moral ruler, to annex shame, remorse, disappointment, loss of the esteem of others, etc., to the acts of disobedience ; they were already included as necessary qualities of sensitive mind. How, then, can we conceive of them as annexed penalties ?

One is confirmed in the correctness of this view by all the analogies of real government ; in the family, in the school, and in the civil community. No wise parent or teacher leaves a child to the results of disobedience without positive chastisements ; that is, without the infliction of some form of evil as a mark of the disapprobation of the parent or of the teacher. No civil government was ever based, or could ever be maintained, on the idea that transgression punishes itself. Positive penalties are always annexed to crime, that the offender may know and feel what others think of his course, and that the tempted may take warning and not bring upon themselves the wrath of rightful authority. This fact has

the more weight, because civil government is of divine origin, has had in the Jewish commonwealth its principles and methods taught by inspiration, and has furnished throughout the Scriptures the analogies and illustrations which set before us the nature of the divine government. It cannot then be that natural evil results are the proper and only penalty of sin. Else all human civil government, even that which has been conducted under the specific direction of God himself, has been a mass of injustice, adding undeserved and excessive penalties to acts of transgression which carried their adequate and just punishment within themselves.

If we resort to the teaching of the Bible with respect to the nature of the penalty of the divine law, in the respect now under consideration, we find nothing to corroborate the idea of mere natural consequence. Doubtless these necessary results of sinful character are faithfully portrayed, that men may take warning; but where are they mentioned as the penalty of the divine law? The passage (Gal. vi. 7, 8) usually quoted to convey this idea does not so affirm. The language of the apostle applies equally well to any fixed consequences of sin, which should be the harvest of evil. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption (or rather, destruction, *φθοράν*. Compare 1 Cor. xv. 42; Col. ii. 22; 2 Pet. ii. 12); but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The expression "God is not mocked" would seem to point to divine action in the case, and the figure used is as appropriate to a positive retribution as to a natural consequence, if the one be as certain as the other. Thus a human judge in sentencing a murderer to death might well tell him that he was only reaping the harvest of his own sowing. By what class of representations is such an idea even indirectly conveyed? Not, surely, by those which speak of God's "anger," "wrath," "indignation," "fury," and "displeasure," as something which is hereafter to be poured out upon the wicked. After every

reasonable allowance for rhetorical phraseology adapted to human comprehension, one cannot discard from the language of Scripture the idea of a positive infliction of evil by God, as a manifestation of his personal authority as ruler of the universe. Especially must this impression be made where the Bible represents his providential inflictions of evil in the course of human history—as in the destruction of the ancient world by the deluge and of the cities of the plain by fire—to be types of the judgment which is to come upon sinners in the eternal world. 2 Pet. ii. 5-9; Jude 5-7.

But an equally formidable objection to this view arises from its want of harmony with the inculcations of reason and of the word of God in respect to the exercise of mercy under a moral government. The fundamental conception underlying the forgiveness of sins, the provision of an atonement, and the justification of a sinner by faith in Christ is, that there is a positive penalty to be remitted, and not simply a moral causation to be reversed. Every clear thinker distinguishes between justification and sanctification; between pardoning and purifying. The common sense of a citizen will not allow him to confound the official act of the governor which, by the issue of a pardon, remits an external penalty and sets the prisoner at liberty, with the influence of the prison-chaplain, which may have produced in him an internal moral reformation. The former has, and the latter has not, performed an act of forgiveness. Yet the chaplain, by the reformation of his character, has partially secured the man's deliverance from the further natural evil consequences of the criminality of his conduct. And so when God forgives a man, that does not simply mean that he sanctifies him, and brings him out from under the natural consequences of sin, though repentance may be a just condition of forgiveness. One might as well talk of a physician's forgiving his patient, because by removing the morbid cause he delivers him from the natural evil effects of disease. But when God pardons, he, as moral governor, sets aside a deserved positive infliction. And thus the scriptural conception of atonement and

justification implies that, in the life and death of Christ, God has provided a sufficient governmental substitute for the legal penalty, by reason of which he may justly forbear to inflict punishment upon a penitent and believing sinner. The doctrine of regeneration and sanctification by the Holy Ghost is a totally different doctrine, and covers another class of facts. It would thus appear that only a positive penalty, in which evil is inflicted in addition to the natural consequences of transgression, can answer the object of moral government.

This view may allow, however, of the penal infliction being in part such a purposed and declared arrangement of the position and circumstances of the transgressor, as shall insure the full action of the necessary laws of evil within and around the soul—these being in a large measure counteracted or interrupted in this world, under a gracious economy of continued probation. We see something analogous to this under civil government, when, by the positive infliction of imprisonment, a criminal is removed from his coveted pursuits, gains, pleasures, and companionships, and is shut up in a cell, or at least within prison walls, where, in addition to loss of liberty and multiplied privileges of the virtuous, he cannot avoid thought, nor escape a sense of guilt, nor be insensible to shame in the presence of visitors, and is liable to all the pangs of remorse by which conscience torments the sinning soul when it is compelled to reflect.

Though the question as to the proper duration of penalty, whether under human or divine government, is not directly involved in the discussion of its nature, yet the view taken of the one subject will reasonably affect our view of the other. If the reformation of the offender be the chief, or even a leading, object of the infliction of penalty, then its duration will wholly or principally depend upon the result secured in that respect. Under the guidance of that principle civil government should inflict no final punishment, such as death, and should not imprison a criminal a day after he gives evidence of reformation. With equal firmness, however, should it, on

that same principle, hold him prisoner until plainly he has reformed, if it be till the end of his life. On this ground, God should punish sinners till they truly repent and become holy, though that should be to all eternity; while the first tear-drop of contrition should quench the flames of hell. But if penalty have other and still higher ends to secure, then its duration will not simply depend upon its effect on the offender, but upon its relation to those other ends, such as the vindication of the authority of the ruler, the support of government, the maintenance of virtue, and the preservation of the general happiness. The ruler, in his wisdom and benevolence, must decide upon the degree and duration of the penalty which is to secure these fundamental objects. It is to be supposed that in his revealed word God would give us information on this vital point, in connection with his own government. That word announces a future and in terms a final judgment, the awards of which are represented as eternal happiness or eternal misery, according to character. No hint of a subsequent change is anywhere given.

In considering this eternity of penal woe four things are to be taken into account, which for lack of space can here only be mentioned without proper elaboration. (1) It is to be borne in mind that the penalty is to guard public interests of infinite moment, which are involved in the recognition of divine authority. The transaction affects universal welfare, since the moral government of God is coextensive with his rational universe, and his treatment of rebel man, involving the manifestation of his feelings and purposes towards sin, has vitally to do with the maintenance of law, justice, and the general welfare. Sin is the defier of divine majesty, and the universal enemy. (2) It is to be remembered that the penalty is not incurred by an *act* of disobedience, but by an *evil character*, or permanent state of will opposed to the great ends of God's government. A man goes to hell for *sin*, rather than for *sins*; for an abiding traitorous mind, rather than for so many specific acts of disloyalty. The old divines used to argue abstractly and mathematically



about the infinite guilt of a single act of disobedience to God. It is quite unnecessary to enter into those doubtful disputations; since there is no evidence that any being ever committed a single sin and immediately repented, returning again to complete virtue; while all the reason and facts of the case seem to show that a sin is not in this matter an isolated act, but is an apostasy, a fall into a state of moral evil, which tends ever to perpetuate itself. (3) The penalty comes, it must especially be recollected, at the close of a gracious system of redemption, which has placed salvation within the reach of every lost sinner, at infinite expense to God, in the death of his Son, and the rejection of which, in the face of such divine compassion, aggravates the original crime, and manifests the most determined hostility to God and holiness. (John iii. 14-21, compared with Heb. x. 26-31.) (4) Finally we are to consider that an endless penalty has its proper degrees of mildness or severity as surely as has one of a temporary character. God can make as great a difference in the doom of sinners as there has been in their degrees of intelligence and in their other circumstances of action and character. Jesus taught that while the disobedient servant who "knew his lord's will" should be "beaten with many stripes," he who in his disobedience, comparatively speaking, "knew not his lord's will" should "be beaten with few stripes" (Luke xii. 47, 48). God will do nothing unwise or unreasonable; nothing which can repress the full volume of the chorus of those who "sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying: 'Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.'" Rev. xv. 3, 4.