

## ARTICLE III.

THEODICY.<sup>1</sup>

BY PROFESSOR JACOB COOPER, D.C.L., LL.D.

TRANSITION FROM NECESSARY TO RESPONSIBLE AGENTS  
REACHED IN MAN.

By this gradual approach we are enabled at last to fix upon an agent who is responsible; because he can conceive and do the act, or abstain. Before its commission there was the alternative of doing or not doing. He has—with reverence be it spoken—as complete liberty of action as the Maker of the universe before the process of creation began. At one period there was nothing but himself,—God alone; the summing up of all potency and knowledge. He could change this condition or not; and did create as a voluntary act. When this process began, it was by the transference of his own energy into phenomenal forms. Even so in the case of the creature man, there is a time in his history when his capacities are all contained in his personality, either latent or in action. Before he commits any conscious act he is in a condition not to do it. This is as certain as anything in science. No fact in logic, no demonstration in mathematics, is more drastic as a proof than that a man is not guilty of an act before he purposes or determines to perform it. But when he conceives its possibility, when he determines its advisability, when he wills its execution, and when that conception, desirableness, and determination have been carried out in an overt act, he has transferred his own creative powers into that act; and it has become his alone, constituting a part of his char-

<sup>1</sup> Concluded from page 421.

acter. He has created the act, not by compulsion, but by independent choice. Henceforth it is a part of his true record, written in letters which cannot be effaced from the tablet of his conscience. Now it is considered a part of the man himself; quite as much as, if not more than, his eye, his hand: even as much as his own personality. For he has transferred a portion of his nature, and by his will, into the act, which now has become a separate moment, that now can be seen, though it existed before only as a potentiality. Just as in the creation by the Supreme Being, that which before was Power, Wisdom, Goodness, but not apprehensible by the senses, becomes phenomenal. Along with the transference so that it could be seen, is also the formation of the sense-perceptions in the creature by which the phenomenal could be recognized.

#### THE PERFORMANCE OF A VOLUNTARY ACT IS CREATIVE.

The performance of a conscious, voluntary act is in reality a new creation. For the man who commits an act, good or bad, has transferred a part of his power into the production of the new thing, which did not exist before, even as the Omnipotent Creator did in the formation of a universe. But the bad man has not exhausted himself by his crime, nor the good man by his benefaction. He transfers a part of himself by the action, but not all. There is still left the power for more, unless, by overexertion through misdirected zeal, the powers of life have been destroyed. The most benevolent and unselfish act that a good man ever proposed was less good than the actor. All his power was not brought into requisition; for, immediately after the performance of the act, he could renew the transference of power to complete another; and so on *ad infinitum*. In like manner, the worst act that ever disgraced humanity was not as bad as the person who planned and executed it. Though the slaughter of the Innocents out-

rages every feeling of the heart, yet this did not express a moiety of Herod's depravity. Pope Alexander VI. was worse than the incest with his illegitimate daughter Lucretia Borgia, and his poisoning one after another of the Sacred College when he invited them to eat bread at his table. So the repeated acts of infanticide of their own offspring, indirectly committed by Rousseau and his degraded spouse—bad as they were—fell short of the corruption which still rankled in their hearts.

THE DEEDS OF A RESPONSIBLE BEING ARE THE PROJECTION OF HIS OWN NATURE.

Thus we have seen that the deeds, good or bad, of a being that acts with deliberation and the freedom of choice, are the projections of his inner and spiritual nature so as to become phenomenal. They are his own work, and he is held responsible for them before the bar of justice. The judgments of his fellows affix the responsibility to him exclusively. Law, as the expression of justice among men in the relations of the state, is founded entirely on this conception. If man were not the author of his acts there could be no law to fix a penalty, because there would be no one to whom this could be attached. If he were not responsible, he could not be guilty before his own conscience; for the conscience could not know what was not the fact in relation to himself. Hence no bad act could distress, and no good one yield any comfort. This is plain, because, if the man himself was not responsible for his own act, no one else could be; and hence there could be no guilt or approval fixed anywhere. For, in order that there be sin, guilt, or punishment, there must be an author of the act having such a quality. If the man who acts does not commit sin or incur guilt, no one else does; and there is no such thing in the world as sin. Nay, more: the same argument holds as to good actions. If they are not the prop-

erty of him who performs them with consciousness and will, surely they cannot belong to one who had no connection with their performance. Thus it would follow that there is no actor who is the author, and therefore responsible for the act; and hence there can be no such quality as evil or good, guilt or innocence, reward or punishment. All acts are neutral, because they are reduced to a nonentity, and have no status in this world. And if they have no status on the theater of their performance, they cannot before a judgment-bar in another world or life. For, if they do not exist, or, what is the same, have absolutely no quality, and no one to whom they can be attached where alone they could be performed, they cannot anywhere else. They cannot come up in final revision if they never existed. And they never existed if they had no author who conceived, willed, executed, or was responsible for them.

EITHER MAN IS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIS OWN ACTS, OR  
NO ONE CAN BE.

Hence, on such supposition as that a man is not the responsible author of his own acts so that they are a part of his nature projected into actuality, there could be nothing virtuous or vicious, good or bad, deserving of punishment or reward, because there is no person or thing to which these could be attached. This reduces the subject to an absurdity so glaring that the mind almost shudders at its contemplation. Therefore, if man be responsible for his act, God cannot be. For there cannot be two authors of the same act, covering the same guilt, any more than there can be two fathers or mothers of the same child. There may be joint actors conspiring to the production of the same act; but the responsibility of each is distinct, and cannot be transferred to the other. So we are brought inevitably to the truth, that, in order for a man to do right or wrong, be virtuous or vicious, incur guilt or merit reward, he must be

the author, the creator, of his own actions. And what he does from choice is his own act, not that of his Creator. And yet again. If he had not the power of such free choice and action, he could not be virtuous or vicious; be rewarded or punished; be made happy by the one course of life, and miserable by the other. God could not—be it reverently spoken—bring him into judgment; nor could his fellow-men pronounce him either guilty or innocent, unless he himself—not another—*unless the creature formed, not the creator, were the sole responsible author of his action.*

ALTERNATIVE TO CREATURES OF FREEDOM OR  
NECESSITY.

If there is to be a creation at all, it must consist of beings that shall be either free to act for themselves, or under the immediate control of the power that made them. These two alternatives exhaust the conditions under which anything can act. If things act merely as they are acted upon, the law of necessity binds them. This is required in the case of all such things as are not endowed with intelligence sufficient to understand what they do and why it is done. This embraces all the materials and forces of the physical world. Here we have Law, fixed and irresistible, and directed by Intelligence working *ab extra* or immanent—but still different from the matter it controls. Here the laws of action are the expression of the power and will, which are diverse from the organ, just as power in human industry is separate from the machine through which it is applied. The Power has never transferred freedom, and, as a consequence, responsibility for their actions, to these materials and forces. There is no guilt or innocence in them, because they simply obey a force which constrains them, but has not given them any responsibility. The laws of nature, which are an expression for the mode

of the Creator's action, here rule supreme and unchanging. On His part there is absolute freedom to continue, to modify, or even to reverse; on their side, a necessity which admits of no change.

The other kind of beings created consists of those that have the responsibility for their actions transferred to themselves. They become independent creatures by virtue of the power bestowed to use their endowments according to their own choice, untrammelled by any other outside their own. That a part of the creation is so endowed we have already seen.

MYSTERY OF DIFFERENCES OF ENDOWMENT IN ALL  
PARTS OF THE MATERIAL WORLD.

This is a mystery, but not greater than confronts us constantly, that every portion was not equally endowed. Why is a diamond dowered with more beauty than a piece of clod? Why has gold more intrinsic value than lead? or why does it possess such qualities as render it suitable for the basis of the world's moneyed transactions? Why are the oak and pine of more value than the thorn or bramble? Why is the rose more acceptable than the stink-weed? And to come nearer home: Why was Plato more gifted intellectually than the mill-wench who ground grain for his bread? Why was Moses more gifted than the camp-follower who lived on the manna that had been kept till it bred worms? Who, O man, made thee to differ? Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus!

But it may still be asked, Why did God create man with an imperfect nature, so that it was possible for him to do wrong and become unhappy? This question, though seemingly a difficult one, is not more so than that he should have instituted differences of talents, education, surroundings, among those who belong to the same race, of one hu-

manity. If this world is to be the theater for the display of God's power and wisdom exclusively, then there must be nothing done except what he does exclusively.

FREEDOM TO CHOOSE INVOLVES POWER TO CHOOSE  
WHAT IS WRONG.

This would exclude individuality, responsibility, growth in character, and happiness of the creature. There might be a material creation, but it could not be one where there would be conscious action and consequent development of character. But if this world is to be a place for the exhibition of individual and independent action, where the Divine attributes are to be transferred to separate personalities which shall work out their own destiny, then man must be endowed with a power to choose. If he be made perfect, he can choose only one way, and can exert no independent action. He cannot improve by his own work, and build up character as his own possession, unless there be a possibility within his reach of taking a wrong course. If he brought himself to such a degree of virtue that he was sure to do right, with no danger of failure, then this would be his own work; and the action, not only good in itself and its fruits, but at the same time the result of the creature's own increment. We have tried to show that, had God made any part of his creation perfect, this would have been equal to himself. Such a creature would be both impossible, and supersede the evident purpose of creation as the sphere for development where each individual thing can have room to work out its own destiny. The thing created must be endowed with some of the Divine attributes; for it is the embodiment thereof, and represents so much as is necessary to enable it to work by and for itself. But it cannot embody all, and must therefore be imperfect at the beginning of its career, with potentialities which by exercising it can advance. And, if imperfect, it

has the double possibility of becoming better or worse. As it must be endowed with freedom of action in order to be a separate personality, and work out its own destiny, it can go backward or forward.

NECESSARY ACTS HAVE NO MORAL QUALITY.

If it is secured from going backward, it is already subject to constraint. It cannot sin, and therefore there is no merit in doing virtuously, if prevented by the condition of its formation—not by a growth of its own which placed it in this vantage-ground—from doing otherwise. So, if freedom be a part of its endowment, the quality of its action will depend upon itself, not upon its Maker; otherwise the action would not belong, in any degree, to the human actors. For since they could not be happy except as the result of activity,<sup>1</sup> they could not get the increment of this activity for themselves unless the action were really their own. Moreover, this action could have no influence in building up character and developing it to a higher stage, unless it were the deliberate choice. For, if constrained, as we have seen, no matter how good or bad the action might be in itself or consequences on other things, it could have no influence upon the actor. And, as the order disclosed in nature, and which corresponds to the necessity of the case, anything which is not perfect can never continue in one stay. It must advance or retrograde. This fact is patent in all the processes of physical nature. Heraclitus expressed this truth profoundly and tersely by the aphorism *πάντα ῥεῖ*. This is equally clear in regard to human forces and moral character. These can never stand still. Though these be developed to eternity, they will not reach the limit of their growth.

<sup>1</sup> Arist. Met., Bk. xi. 1072 b. *ἡ γὰρ τοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωὴ, ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἡ ἐνέργεια, ἐνέργεια δὲ ἡ καθ' αὐτὴν ἐκείνου ζωὴ ἀπλοστὴ καὶ αἰδώς.*



## NO PROGRESS POSSIBLE WITHOUT IMPERFECTION AND RESPONSIBILITY.

If they were created in their highest possible grade, the universe, so far as dependent on them, would be at a standstill. The Father would have done all that could be done, and so there would be no work left for his children. Darwin's theory of development—which is no more Darwin's than Spinoza's pantheism is the elaboration of the "God-intoxicated" philosopher—is a truth far-reaching and well-nigh all-embracing; a truth,—but, like all others of human devising, only a half-truth! The limitations of human nature prevent any man from seeing more than a few of the innumerable facets of that brightest of all jewels—Truth. Development is true, far-reaching, unassailable,—provided it be directed by intelligence, either immanent or transcendent. And, so far as the fundamental truth is concerned in relation to the development itself, it makes no difference which method is assumed. But it makes all difference whether or not we assume individual voluntary—and therefore responsible—action. Both methods are followed in nature. In the purely material or physical the development is unconscious to the thing itself. The crystal forms according to a fixed law which operates *ab extra*, and of which the material can have no knowledge. The plant springs from the seed, and its function of life both disintegrates and integrates the material around it; but by processes of which it is not aware. Similar methods are pursued by animal life up to a certain point where instinct—as we call it, but which is the forerunner, if not the collateral kinsman, of conscious intelligence—comes in, and displays the first intimations of responsible action. But the great forces of nature,—gravity, electricity, magnetism, undulation of light and heat,—all work without consciousness of their action. The Almighty Power who transferred a part of his energy and placed this subject to

modes of action which we call the laws of nature, is wholly responsible for their work. In itself this transferred energy can have no moral quality, because it simply obeys the control which it cannot know, and consequently can have no thought of disobeying.

MAN THE WEAKEST AND STRONGEST FACTOR IN NATURE.

But the creation of man in the image of his Maker involved additional qualities to differentiate him from them; to enable him to understand and control these, and to know the reason of his action. "The thinking reed" of Pascal expresses this truth most forcibly. The reed is weak physically. It bends or is broken by the storm which sweeps over it with relentless force. But still it is greater than this force; yea, than all physical forces combined. For it knows what breaks or bends it. It is conscious of its own limitations, and those of nature. Weak as it is in physical force, it controls all the forces of the world. It can learn the laws of their action, can put itself *en rapport* with them, can guide them, and compel them thereby to do its bidding: a process going on since man was upon earth.

PHYSICALLY STRONG WHEN HE KNOWS HOW TO APPLY  
THE FORCES OF NATURE.

It was feeble at first, but is increasing in efficiency until it will make every force of nature tributary to its will. Thus man shows himself the vicar of God on earth. He shows that he can by conscious action master all the forces of the world; and, among these,—even preëminent above the rest,—his own powers, his own inclinations. Thus he can increase in control over other things by knowing their capacities and modes of action, and by willing to guide them in one way rather than another. By a like method he gets control over himself through self-knowledge, the

foundation of all other wisdom. Just as he can control nature and develop her power by bringing all the forces of the physical world to his assistance; even so he can get the mastery over himself by understanding the nature and extent of his capacities, and by a full determination to employ them for good or for evil. Human nature is not complete as it comes into the world, a separate individuality. But it has the power of self-exertive action, and can control itself as a separate personality. This includes power of development in its control over the earth. Man is placed in the garden of Paradise, to cultivate it and enjoy its fruits; to enter upon the possession of all the treasures of the world, and utilize them for his own purposes as their rightful master.

MORALLY STRONG WHEN HE GETS THE MASTERY OVER  
HIMSELF.

But in a still greater degree is he put in possession of himself, that he may by conscious action get control of every power he possesses, to make himself better while improving everything around him. The analogy between his external and internal duty seems complete.

Now he could not gain this mastery, he could not develop his own character, unless he had the power of independent responsible action. The work which he did on any other basis would not be his, and for that reason would have no relation to his character. It might be good or bad *per se*; but he would be neither while performing it. Thus it is indispensable, if he be the author of his own acts, and they are to have any influence on his own spiritual growth, that he be not perfect at first. And if he become better or worse—and he cannot remain stationary—he must have the power of acting in a way which will make him better or worse. So we are driven necessarily to the assumption, that, if God created a being with any-

thing to do, and by his action develop his character, he must be endowed not only with the power of independent action, but with the choice between two alternatives. Otherwise he would be a creature of necessity, just as the material universe; and neither his being nor his actions would have any moral quality. And thus he must have the possibility of choosing wrong, if he have that of choosing right; of doing evil, if he have that of doing good; and therefore of making himself worse, if he can make himself better.

GOD CANNOT BE THE AUTHOR OF MAN'S ACTS, IF MAN IS A RESPONSIBLE CREATURE.

God is not the author, however, of his actions, if he be made a responsible being. Accordingly, if man is to develop a character which is to be his own, and for which he is to receive reward or censure; if he is to be a creator himself, and thus differ from the materials and forces of nature which he controls, and which act simply as they are acted upon, and be distinguished from them by conscious growth, then he must be imperfect when he is created, otherwise he cannot have the power of free choice, which is necessary to self-development. No act which he performs will be his own under any other condition. His nature is fixed if he be made perfect, and his actions belong exclusively to the one who endowed him with a nature that could act only according to the necessity imposed upon it. And hence, though a distinct individuality, the action belongs to Him who gave it such a nature that its action is wholly compulsory.

OPTIMISM ADMITS THE PRESENCE, BUT LOOKS FOR THE FINAL EXTINCTION, OF SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

Though the constitution of the world shows itself clearly to be optimistic, and therefore there is a gradual elimi-

nation of evil which gives us assurance that it and its consequences will eventually disappear; yet this does not account for its presence, or explain why it should have been permitted by a holy and omnipotent God. Evil is a terrible reality. It is a monster which threatens us continually in the present, and casts its shadow over all the future. The question then inevitably recurs, Can any theodicy—however plausible, however clearly from a philosophical view it may account for the necessity of making man imperfect—show how any system of Divine government can make amends for the woe which sin has brought into this world, and the unending misery it presages in that which is to come? Such questions are more easily asked than answered. The dreadful reality stares us in the face, and is one of the dread secrets of our destiny which perchance never can be explained until we know as we are known, until the vail of mortality be removed, and we see face to face.

SIN A VOLUNTARY ACT, WHICH WE MAY ENTIRELY  
AVOID; SO THAT MAN MIGHT HAVE KEPT THE  
WORLD FREE FROM IT.

Still, when a difficulty remains under any condition possible, the attempts to mitigate or enlighten by rational explanation—as this is all that can be done—may have their place. The supreme consolation, however, is that it is possible for all to escape the penal consequences of sin, and thus render the presence of evil in the world harmless, so far as guilt and pollution are concerned; and through eternity to be wholly free from this blight. Such certainly is the revealed will of God; and, to enable us to achieve this blessed destiny, he has prepared an efficient method for our deliverance. For, the Divine law under which man is to achieve his destiny is perfect, and, if followed, would counteract the influence of evil to such degree that it would

expel it from the world. Man has the power to do right: to do this all the time, under all circumstances. It is to his interest to do right in every case that can possibly arise. Hence, whenever he sins, he voluntarily chooses what is worse, and to his harm, rather than what is better and to his advantage. Therefore this misery, so far as his own action is concerned, is self-chosen; under his own control exclusively, and so could be avoided. The Divine law regulating his earthly destiny teaches this by letter, and enforces it in every experience which he can ever meet. This law denounces punishment for offenses, and thereby makes man responsible for his acts; makes them his own creation, and hence the author, also, of their consequences. It not only denounces punishment, but begins to inflict this as soon as the law is violated. It warns in advance of action; warns during the commission of the offense; begins to punish at once; and never ceases warning while this can do any good: that is, until the nature has voluntarily become so corrupt that warning would have no other effect, save to harden the offender, and render its own authority despised and ridiculed. It ceases then out of pity for the offender, so as not to add to his guilt. But it warned incessantly while there was any hope of being heeded.

RESPONSIBILITY FIXES THE GUILT OF SIN EXCLUSIVELY  
UPON THE ONE WHO COMMITS IT.

If man be an independent being, then these facts fix the guilt of his conduct entirely upon himself. It is vain for him to say to his Maker, Why hast thou made me thus, so that it was possible for me to sin and bring misery upon myself? Why not, with thy infinite power and goodness, have made me so that I could not sin? This is the wail of a weakling, the complaint of a coward, who has not manhood enough to desire a separate being, or an intelli-

gence and will of his own. It would seem to be the greatest wonder of theology, in its relation to men, that such a good-for-nothing poltroon was ever created. But stay! It is he himself that has made his character so despicable. It was not God who made him such, as he complains; but it is his own work which he tries to transfer to his Maker and make him responsible for its worthlessness. When the question is of character it is man, not God, who is the creator. God gives the capacity, but places upon man the responsibility, of development, which becomes a veritable creation, the forming something new; the adding an increment where before there was absolutely nothing. It is worthy of special attention that it is only those who make themselves bad that accuse God of their sin, or complain that he did not make them like the insensible materials or forces of nature, incapable of doing anything of their own volition. They confess their unfitness for freedom, declaring that they are not worthy of being entrusted with it, and should not have been left to themselves. Self-confessed, they need a keeper; and one so strict that they could never, by any possibility, have done wrong; since of themselves they cannot do right, even though it be always to their own advantage.

Such is the law of nature, the moral law deducible from the relation between man and his Maker; between one endowed with freedom of action and a Lawgiver who governs him exclusively for his own behoof. For the code under which he is placed is reasonable in its requirements: always salutary when obedience is rendered; always attended with misery when disobeyed.

CHRIST'S ATONEMENT GIVES MAN A SECOND TRIAL OF  
RESPONSIBILITY.

But the first condition, though justifying the Maker both in man's formation and the law under which he is to

live, is not all. When man did not will to live according to the law of righteousness, which is at the same time that of happiness; after he had voluntarily transgressed and brought misery upon himself, God interposes for his deliverance. He offers pardon through a free-will sacrifice, made in the person of the Ideal Man; who showed, in fact, that it is possible to keep the whole law. After man fell from his high estate, the substitute offers himself to take the place of the offender, so as to reinstate him in the place he first occupied. Still more, he offers to cleanse man's nature, which has been corrupted. He sends the Divine Spirit, who will, if permitted, expel from the heart the demons of sin which man has invited to enter there. He will then himself enter, and occupy the place forever.

BLASPHEMY TO SAY THAT THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM  
MAKES GOD THE AUTHOR OF SIN.

This much is said in answer to the blasphemous objections of those who assert that the system of religion in the Jewish and Christian scriptures makes God an arbitrary tyrant, because he created a being who would go astray; and therefore is the author of the sin of man and the misery, temporal and eternal, which follows as a consequence. Such objections are thus shown to be wholly reckless and unreasonable. God has justified his ways to man by endowing him with the ability to obey the law of his constitution; by enacting a code of positive commands whose justice is shown in that obedience to it always brings happiness; while its infraction inevitably causes misery. Its efficiency is displayed in that it executes itself. It makes man the conscious author of his own act; the rewarder of himself when he does right; the executioner of the penalty when he does wrong. Thus "the law of the Lord is perfect."



THERE CAN BE NO CHARACTER CREATED BY MAN IF HIS ACTION IS COMPULSORY.

It is vital to our subject to ask, How is it possible for a created being to do good and build up character? It has been shown clearly that no being can be the author of an act if he be compelled to do it. If, therefore, man be possessed of such a nature, placed in such conditions, and influenced by such motives, as, severally or jointly, force him to do a certain act, then, however good this may be, the merit of it belongs to the forces which rendered it necessary. If he is, as often asserted, "the creature of circumstances," he has no responsibility, and his actions with reference to himself no moral quality. In order to do the act himself, he must be in such a condition that he could do otherwise. There must be alternatives placed before him, and he make a choice between them. That choice involves a creative power of his own. It must not depend upon the stronger motive. For in that case the motive, not he, is the author; quite as much as the superior weight in one arm of the scales determines the inclination. Hence if man had been made perfect, or if he had no power of choice, or if placed in a world where there was no temptation to do wrong, of course he would, as an organ or instrument, transmit the influences which moved, *impelled*, him in the direction of least or no resistance. But the action would not have been his, and hence its influence upon himself wholly neutral. To constitute an action his he must create the motive himself. To create this he must have the power of choice, so that he shall in fact be the originator of the motive, and have the determining factor in himself. This which is called voluntarism makes man the controlling force in all his conduct. The action is his because he, and he alone, does it. This requires that there must be an alternative. The alternative must be selected, not forced upon him. If he have only one motive, there

can be no alternative; and if only one kind of motives be offered, then again there can be no choice. So it comes round to the same fact: when there is no choice, the action is not of him who is the medium, but of the controlling power which placed him in a condition that determined his action. Hence the imperfection of the creature, by which he is not compelled to act in a certain way, and freedom of choice, by which he makes the act his own, are prime conditions of human virtue. There must be a possibility of doing wrong, else there is no possibility of doing right; since any act, in order to belong to the actor, must be the result of his choice; and there can be no choice when only one motive is presented.

VIRTUE GAINED EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH CONFLICT.

Human virtue, then, is the result of conflict. The character is made strong by opposition. There can be no victory without conflict, and there can be no conflict when all the influences tend only one way. If man is to be an independent being, if he is to do right by an act which shall be his own, then he must both have the power, and be placed under the conditions where there are incentives, to do wrong. The danger has to be met and overcome before there can be any bravery: the sin must be seen, must have allurements to embrace it, before there can be any virtue in the choice, or any merit of rejection in the act. The character of those angels who never sinned may have been pure, but was not perfect, because some of these beings exercised their freedom and rebelled. Man was created with a pure nature, but not perfect. There was every inducement for him to remain in that condition, short of compulsion, which would have destroyed his nature, and rendered it impossible for him to possess even an accountable individuality, or persist in the creative process. But the creature, being made subject to vanity, that is, made

in such condition that it could go astray and destroy itself, was, at the same time, placed in a state of hope.<sup>1</sup> It has the power of obeying the law which increases its happiness; of avoiding the sin which works its misery; of making a choice which is the new creation; and shows its severance from the great Creator who endowed it with capacities for independent action. By the exercise of its own powers it can compel the forces of physical nature to do its bidding. By the exercise of its own free choice, acting under a moral law as infallible as that in the material world, it can create a nature for itself; can build up a character which will insure happiness to itself, and the greatest good to the universe.

PERFECTION COMES AT THE END OF, NOT BEFORE, THE  
DISCIPLINARY STAGE.

The objection to the plan of creation offered by cavilers against the theistic system is that it demands perfection at the beginning. If that were possible to the Creator, without, as we have seen, exhausting his own attributes, and making the creature supersede the Maker, it would also exclude any growth on the part of the creature; for, being perfect at the beginning, no improvement would be possible. This would be contrary to the development theory, which seems to be the order of nature. Our enemies, in constructing the doctrine of evolution, have forged a weapon ready for our use. In their wish to get rid of a personal Creator, they attribute to the material universe a power to create itself, to develop itself; and, in a word, to do, through blind impersonal and immanent force, all that the theist ascribes to a personal God. "*Hypotheses non fingo*," says the doubter: "I take facts as I find them, and let them speak for themselves." But he makes more hypotheses, demands more data, than the most orthodox be-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. viii. 20.

liever in revealed religion; for he makes his blind forces act in ways that have no analogy in human industry. He makes them work directly contrary to all known methods.

DEVELOPMENT IS ONLY EFFECTED THROUGH SUPERINTENDING INTELLIGENCE.

But error always overreaches itself. The development theory, or evolution, is never employed in human experience without Intelligence to direct. Even in the construction of this theory there was some intelligence—though not as much in the modern claimants as they thought. For this doctrine was furnished ready by the Greek philosophers. Even the word *φύσις* contained the whole theory in epitome. But we accept the development theory with thanks, not to Darwin or Haeckel, but to Anaxagoras and Plato. Everything grew, evolved itself, developed, under the directing power which the philosophers called *Noûs*. Even so the world developed, under the directing wisdom and energy of the Supreme *Noûs*, from the incandescent gas, through star-dust, nebulae, molten mass, solid crust, habitable globe fit for the great theater of God's moral government. Even so, when the time was ready, He made man, endowing him with capacities, like his own in kind but not in degree,—since that would be impossible,—to carry on another creation. This was to be shown in subduing the earth with all its forces, and rendering them subservient to the vast designs of a humanity endowed with god-like attributes. We see constant evidences of this development. Man was to subdue nature and employ all her forces for good; to utilize all the resources of the material for the advantage of the sentient, the intellectual, and the moral world. And God was well pleased at the conclusion of his six periods of work. For he saw that they were all very good; and metaphorically rested; rested since he had completed his share of the creation.

THE FORMATION OF CHARACTER AN ACTUAL CREATION  
BY MAN.

To be the ruler over all the other parts, He had created a son in his own image, to whom he delegated the care of the new-made world. This son, as a free agent, is endowed with capacity and power of unending development in control over physical nature, and a veritable creative energy in building up character by progressive mastery over himself. His work in framing a character by new increments—which did not exist before he added them as the result of his self-augmenting choice—makes him a veritable creator. And the work of thus endowing a personality with godlike attributes is the greatest<sup>1</sup> miracle of the ages. For it is the production of something out of nothing, and that something a disciplined soul which by its own action upon itself is constantly becoming more like God. Not perfect at the beginning any more than the star-dust filling space was a perfect world, save in capacity; but having in himself the endowments for infinite expansion. But he must be a creator, not of the material world, but of a work which the Lord Christ says was yet greater, the formation of a character fit for heaven. This shall advance in knowledge and goodness under the voluntary obedience to the law of his being, until we shall have a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

## THE SYSTEM OF THE WORLD OPTIMISTIC.

We believe this promise because we are sure that we live under a system of Optimism. Sin will wear itself out because it is self-destructive. Righteousness will multiply and expand because it has the power of an endless life. Sin is suicidal: virtue conservative. Man is in the midst of the conflicts with sin which disobedience to the Divine law has brought into the world with misery and death in

<sup>1</sup>John xiv. 12.

its deplorable train. He can meet and overcome sin, not only as it appears a horrid monster in the world about him, but still more in his own heart. As he has the prerogative of choice, he can master himself by self-determining will-power, even as he is doing with the physical world by the culture of his intellect. He is a co-worker with the Christ of God in conquering evil by the resistless power of purity and holiness. The enormity and misery of sin are portentous. The earth seems full of the habitations of cruelty. But right-doing has a subduing energy which nothing can withstand. For "more are they that are for us than those who are against us." The time will come when righteousness shall cover the earth even as the waters cover the solemn depths of the sea. This world shall be subdued to the Lord Christ, the Ideal man, who will help his brethren by becoming one with them, to conquer where they feel themselves incapable in their own strength. And being co-workers with him, at last all evil, and with it all misery, shall be subdued under his feet. Then shall come the end.

FINIS CORONAT OPUS.

Each human soul, completely freed from sin; will be perfect in its purpose; and by self-control tending toward perfection in its performance. It will project itself unremittingly in the creation of good works; embodying, as far as is possible for a finite creature, the character of its Maker. Created in the image of God but not his equal; endowed with powers fitting him to build up a world in himself, man will, in the end, have achieved the purpose of the Creator. The fellow-workmen with Christ in the creation of this new heaven and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, when they have completed their discipline, will render up the account of their stewardship under a scheme of Moral Freedom, and henceforth, even forever, will be free from

evil. God's work of creation was finished when he formed man endowed with responsibility and creative powers. Christ declared that the work of redemption which he had been appointed to do was finished when he died upon the cross. Man finishes his work of preparation on earth and is called to a higher service. The dark episode of sin has enabled responsible beings to unite with their Maker in the work of creation. Entrusted with personal freedom, they show their ability while working under the Divine law to fulfill all righteousness. For with the materials furnished them by their Master-workman they have built up for themselves a character with ever-expanding capacities for activity and happiness. Man was made, not a necessary unit in a nexus of sequences, not a link in the chain of material causes, but an independent self-originating factor; and therefore exclusively responsible for his own action. This involved imperfection in his nature at the beginning, which required coöperation on his part to make it complete. Thus creation finds its perfection in the completion, and not in the beginning, of the work.