

A  
DISCOURSE  
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ON THE  
IMMUTABLE DECREES OF GOD,  
AND THE  
FREE AGENCY OF MAN,  
DELIVERED IN THE  
CITY HALL, NEWBURYPORT, MASS.,

Sunday, November 22d, 1857.

BY  
MRS. CORA L. V. HATCH,  
OF NEW YORK.

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PHONOGRAPHICALLY REPORTED BY JAMES M. POMEROY.

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NEW YORK:  
PUBLISHED BY B. F. HATCH, M. D.  
1858.

## P R E F A C E.

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THE immutable decrees of God and the Free Agency of Man, has ever been the mooted question of Doctors of Divinity in all ages of the world, and probably will remain open for discussion forever. Until we can draw the dividing line between the finite and infinite, and ascertain how far man can act entirely disconnected from all influence of the Divine Mind, if at all, there will be a diversity of opinions upon this all-important subject. I say important, for it appears to me to be the keystone of the arch which spans from man to God and on which rests the great theological fabrics of all time. It is evident that if God really governs the universe, He does it mentally and morally, as well as physically. Those who take the side of what is called free agency, do so from a perfect consciousness of a power within themselves to act as they please. This does not reach the root of the difficulty; for the question is not whether man is controlled by physical force; but how far he, as an individual, can separate his mind from the great body of mind by which he is surrounded, both visible and invisible; and then act independent of all conditions, both mental and physical. If man would be perfectly free, and independent of all things else, he must be in some place where God is not, and surrounded by no circumstances or conditions. But as long as he is within God's Universe, he is within the influence of the Divine Mind and all things He has made.

It is conceded that this is the most metaphysical subject involved in theology, and one which is most inexplicable. How well and ably it is handled in the accompanying discourse, we leave for the candid and critical reader to decide.

Mrs. HATCH, at the time of her delivery of this discourse, was seventeen years and seven months old. After she had taken the stand, in company with myself, I invited the audience to select a Committee of three competent persons to designate a subject for the evening's discourse. That Committee was duly chosen and voted in by the audience. I then stated that they had the privilege of presenting any question or theme in Philosophy, Moral or Religious ethics for elucidation. They brought in the following question:—“Do the immutable decrees of God interfere with, or hinder, the freedom of action in man?” She immediately arose; and after chanting and offering up thanks to God, proceeded to an elucidation of her subject. I give it to the reader without a change of a word, from the Reporter's manuscript, that he may have it as it came from the the speaker, *in a Trance state*.

From this statement, it will be seen that the discourse is entirely impromptu, and delivered without one minute opportunity for reflection or arrangement of ideas. As N. P. Willis says of another discourse, delivered by Mrs. Hatch on a previous occasion, “*How to explain it*, with her age, habits and education, is the true point at issue.”

B. F. HATCH, M. D.

# LECTURE.

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THE services were opened by introductory remarks by Dr. HATCH, which were followed with the chanting of the Lord's Prayer, by Mrs. HATCH.

The Committee was then appointed, at the request of Dr. HATCH, by the audience, to choose a theme for the evening's discourse, after consultation, they presented the following subject:—

“DO THE IMMUTABLE DECREES OF GOD INTERFERE WITH, OR HINDER, THE FREEDOM OF ACTION IN MAN?”

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## PRAYER.

INFINITE JEHOVAH! Thou who hast ruled, and who rulest, and who shalt rule forever; Thou who art our God, and our Father; who hast seen the end from the beginning of all time and eternity! we would bless and adore Thee to-night. The unnumbered worlds that revolve in space are but as atoms, compared with Thine infinite standard. The suns and systems which revolve in harmony and concord with Thine own mind, but express the beauty and divinity of Thy



soul, which filleth heaven, and pervadeth all things, whilst man, the physical epitome of Thy creation, stands forth brightly and purely the image of Thine infinity. We would praise Thee as humanity; we would adore Thee as the human soul, attuned to perfect concord with Thy being. We would worship Thee as the sunshine, as the star-beams worship Thee, when they shed their full effulgence of light upon the altar of Thy creation. We would bow down before the sunlight of Thy love, and drink in its splendors, live in its brightness and know that it comes from Thee. We would lay upon the altar of our inmost being, Thy dwelling-place, all holy and perfect gifts, all divine affections, all beauty and power, all emblems of religion, of science, of art, of morality, and ask Thee to receive and approve them. Nay, we would concentrate the wisdom of worlds into one science, and ask of Thee if it be true. We would analyze and scan Thine existence; we would penetrate into our inmost being, and see if we are allied to Thee, — and see if there is a spark there which can have been kindled only by Thy divine power, — which has been thrown off from Thy nature as a corruscation of light which may revolve around Thee forever and forever. Our Father: though we are but satellites, though but smaller planets, compared with the emblems of Thy power which have existed in the past, — though we contain but in a finite degree what Thou art in the infinite, — still we must compare Thee to what we know of Thy works, and conceive of Thee as the harvest-time speaks of Thy bounty, when it yields its treasures to the earth, as the splendors of the deep sunset illustrate the beauty and perfectness of Thine external presence, as the morning beams burst in upon the earth, filling her with life and joy, as the spring-time gives flowers and birds, as summer, with her rich foliage, trails her garlands around us, as the winter comes, cold and icy, yet brilliant with the diamond dewes that glitter in the moon. Our souls would know Thee in the spring-time of life, when gloom and care are unseen, when the child begins to put forth the shoots of its developing character, — in summer, in the days of youth and of early manhood, — in autumn, when we

reap the fruit of our labors,—in the winter of old age, when the blossom of the earthly spring has spread into the snowy flower,—in that earliest spring-time of eternity—we would still recognize and still adore Thee. We would worship Thee as does the flower, with its fragrance; as do the billows of the ocean, when they dash against the shore with their deep, sonorous sound, forever and forever conveying an image of eternity and infinity; as do the sparkling streamlets, dancing down the mountain-side; as do the high mountain-tops, with their glaciers bathed in sunshine and beauty. We would adore Thee as all Nature adores Thee; and more, as the immortal, the universal soul adores its Creator and its God.

And, Spirit of the universe, as these Thy children gaze through the dim vista of the Past, as through the opening Future they see the faint outlines of that eternity towards which they are tending,—as within their souls they realize but one atom of the comprehensiveness of Thy universe, may the chains of bondage, of ignorance, of error, be burst, and the soul freed, like the caged bird let loose, to soar to its own mountain-peaks of thought and of wisdom. The soul cannot be chained by ignorance, by error, by darkness, or by crime. These are but the result of the lack of knowledge, which Thine own Spirit will overpower—the Eternal Spirit of love. And O, Father of the Universe, as the stones are being rolled away from the sepulchres of men's souls, as, one by one, the spirits of Thy children are waking from the sleep of ignorance and depravity, and ascending to the higher spheres of love and of Thy divine perfection, as the grave has lost its terror, and death its sting,—as eternity beams in brightly, through the windows of man's being, and life, and joy, and happiness; as these whispers are no longer heard at a distance, but around the lattice and beneath the roof of the cottage—so may Thy children feel that wherever Thou mayst be, Thy face, and Thy power, and Thine infinite goodness overlooks and controls the whole. And while Thou art infinite, while Thou art Jehovah, while Thou dost reign

in strength, and while Thy subjects are seeking to understand and to grasp after Thee, so long shalt Thou receive praises, unceasing praises, forever and forever,—so long shall the widow's tear and the orphan's wail be heard by Thee,—so long shall the mourner rejoice, and shall they that tremble, the deep-depressed and down-trodden, find a friend in Thee; so long as Thou art the Infinite God, so long will truth triumph over error, light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance; and Thy children shall ever aspire to freedom, to justice, and to beauty. We implore Thee not, to cast any especial dispensation upon them, to shower blessings upon those who are in poverty and in wretchedness, but only that the store-house of Thy childrens' hearts may be opened, that they to whom Thou hast given the blessings of charity and love may administer to their brothers and sisters, that the gifts bestowed by Thee may be generously distributed; we only ask that thy children, each and every one, may assist each other in their divine progress up the steep of time and eternity, that they who profess to worship and follow Thee, that they who speak the name of the meek and lowly Jesus may follow in his footsteps, may raise up the down-trodden, administer to the needy, assist the friendless; and thus peace, prosperity, liberty, and justice will dawn in upon Thy children, and this nation, and all other nations and people will thus fulfill the demands of that Christianity which is the embodiment of Thy being, and constitutes Thine eternal and infinite love. And to Thee, our Father, shall be all the praise which shall arise to-night from the souls of Thy children like the sweet cadences of melody, and, blended with the music of angel choirs, shall proclaim that Thou art Jehovah forever and forever.

## DISCOURSE.

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THE SUBJECT presented for our consideration is one which has occupied the attention of the deepest theologians, in all countries and ages, one which, since mind began its operations, since man has been conversant with the divine principles of religion and theology, has received the attention of all thinkers and writers upon moral and theological subjects. It is necessarily an abstract subject, one which involves as well metaphysics as theology, and which we must necessarily view from our own stand-point of development. It is not our intention to quote on this occasion, any theological authority, for such authority will in general, when applied to individuals confuse, rather than assist, in the argument. We shall view this subject on the simple basis of man's reason and intelligence, aside from the theological revelations which may be supposed to have a bearing upon it, We shall set forth our own thoughts, based upon our highest conceptions of justice and equity, but with due deference to the religious principles of others.

It is conceded, by all nations, that there are one or more principles in this universe, which control and guide it, which are the radiant sources and the life of all things, and, consequently, are infinite, supreme, and eternal. Concentrating all religious ideas together, we have this one, which is most consistent with reason, with intuition, with revelation; it is the GREAT JEHOVAH, or Infinite Spirit, when literally translated from the Hebrew signifying the Future, the Present, and the Past, that which has been, which is, and which ever shall be. All the divine elements of the universe are concentrated into this one word and this one power,—JEHOVAH, the Infinite.

Now in what manner this Jehovah, this Divine mind acts, is not for us to tell. We can only perceive His infinitude by the infinitude of our own observation; we can only comprehend His divinity by as much of the divine as we possess ourselves; we can only see His omnipotence by viewing the works of His hand; can only conceive of His presence by the everlasting principles of life which pervade all things. These to the common observer convey but little hint of the Divine mind, but to the soul awake to all of the beautiful and perfect in nature, each object in the universe is an oracle proclaiming God's presence and power. We shall not attempt to convince the skeptic that there is a God. We shall not attempt to prove that the theological ideas of all nations are founded upon truth. We can only assume

it, from the fact that men in every nation and climate have worshipped a God or Gods, have believed in Jehovah. From this fact, we must either establish the principle that there is a God, who rules the universe, or that the whole is a stupendous failure, a great work of chance, in which men and women flit through the earth like insects through a summer's day, living for an hour, then passing from existence. But with this assumption and this evidence of all humanity, we must proclaim, upon the face of our argument, that there is an infinite God.

Infinitude means something more than we are led to believe by common teachers, something more than any sect, party, or nation have led us to discover, something more than all theology can tell us; it means something more than eternity can reckon. It means boundless Time, boundless Power, boundless Being. It means not only that which has been, but that which shall be, that which ever is, the Spirit, and the Power, and the Life, which controls the universe. We may divide it into as many periods, as many ages, as we please; we may assume that it is composed of one or more persons; but still we have an Infinite Principle; it is a Unity; it is a One; and that is what constitutes its infinitude. Men are but particles, atoms, a something created; our souls are but as a fleeting breath of wind, compared with this Everlasting Power, this Infinite God.

Now we have only to judge of the attributes of this

infinite Being by the observations which we may make through our own intelligence, through the comprehension which is given us, through the reason and judgment, through the intuition, the revelation, the history of the human race. First, we judge of His attributes by perceiving the attributes of man, as it was customary in the earlier ages of religion to personify God by the passions and proclivities of persons. Consequently, in those nations, their God possessed love, anger, hatred, warfare, revenge ; all the passions which characterize those earlier nations were personified in various gods, which gods, embodied, in wood and stone, resembled the interior conceptions, as formed by those people, of these passions to which the human mind and soul is heir. And when man's being became more developed, after those earlier nations, there was received by Moses, the Hebrew, a distinctive idea of the existence of a single God, an infinite Jehovah, a Ruler and Controller of the universe, unknown, unseen, unheard, yet felt and believed in by him. What of truth may be embodied in the Ten Commandments revealed in the Mosaic dispensation is not for us to judge. We see, in the words spoken by Moses, evidence of a high and pure inspiration ; we see a dawning of a brighter light than that which characterized the Egyptian and other heathen nations, we see higher conceptions of something which their own finite soul conceived, indeed, but which was called forth by some interior, some diviner principle of their



nature. Now, examining the history of all religions, we perceive that the religious ideas of mankind have sensibly advanced, since those early periods, and we are led to believe that man has a finite being and is constantly progressing.

The idea then presents itself, — does the Infinite progress? Man is but a part of the infinite creation. Deity is the Infinite. That which is a unit, perfect, immutable, self-existent, can never progress, He being all-pervading, being whatever is, whatever has been, whatever will be.

With this idea of Deity, we come down to the conceptions of the human soul. It has been acknowledged and believed, in all ages, that man contains, in his divine and interior soul, the principle of goodness, that that principle is, in a greater or less degree, predominant in the human mind and heart, and that when left to its own dictation and control, it will lead the human soul into beauty, happiness, and peace. The most distinct manifestation of goodness, personified in the human form, was in Jesus of Nazareth; and yet in his own words he distinctly proclaims that he is not good, that none but God is good. Then it necessarily follows that if we discover what we term goodness, or something which forever overpowers the depravity of man's nature — that if men possess this in that finite degree — Deity must possess it in an infinite degree. If God be infinite goodness, then He can recognize no principle of evil,



or error. Consequently, all His works are the out-birth of that infinitude of perfect goodness. If this be true, certainly the idea of a positive principle of evil must be abandoned. Certainly the idea personified in the human mind as the principle of evil cannot exist. The principle of evil, or, in other words, a principle opposed to God, cannot, as many have supposed, be traced in the human mind. We will throw aside, for the present evening, all the ideas relative to a personal devil, and simply assume it to be a fact that there is discovered, in the human constitution, somewhere, a principle of evil. We thus discover it must have a source. There being but one source and one Creator, we must trace it back to Him, and He must be infinitely evil. One of these two propositions is true ; either the human soul contains a principle of goodness, and that principle in the finite degree the representative of infinite goodness, or else the soul contains a principle of evil which is diametrically opposed to goodness, and the source of that must be infinite evil. We think this will be conceded by all minds who reason from the strict rule of philosophy and of logic. We think it must be conceded by all who view the human soul as being the child of Deity, by all who claim to worship a heavenly Father and a divine God. It is asserted that our God is a partial God, a revengeful God, a God of hatred, and malice, and vengeance, and, in the same breath, that He is a

just, and merciful, and lovely God. We are led to believe that there must be Gods many, and rulers many, to personify by these characters. For, when men endow Deity with all these properties, they must remember, that if they, and all, possess them in a finite degree, He must possess them in an infinite. And such a God, personified with infinite goodness, and, in the same breath, with infinite hatred, with infinite beauty and infinite vengeance, is an absurdity. Either He is one or the other of these Gods. Either we must divide God against His own kingdom and His own universe, and thereby clip the wings of Omnipotence, or assume that He is a God of goodness, and can never countenance any principle of evil in his creation.

With this view of the attributes of Deity, we will suppose that He contains all the favorable qualities which have been discovered in the human mind. And, certainly, it is a striking fact, if evil be a principle, and an infinite principle in the universe, that goodness must triumph over evil. It has been the history of humanity that, notwithstanding all the deep crimes which have been perpetrated, in all ages, there is a soul, a principle of goodness, which overpowers every principle of evil, and which makes man beam forth as a divine being; there is a principle of knowledge, which overpowers ignorance, ignorance being in our view, only another name for evil. And in the exact proportion in which men become enlightened,

and acquainted with their own being, in that proportion crime and evil depart. We know that it is asserted, by many, that all the men and women of this age are going further and further from God; but certainly every principle of humanity or justice forbids us to entertain such an opinion. What are your ideas of the comparative strength of good and evil, what your estimate of the excellence of morality, that can permit you to hold such views? We conceive it to be a libel on God and humanity, to proclaim that man is growing worse and worse, while, in truth, the plain voice, both of reason and experience, declares that he grows better and better,—to charge upon the infinite God that He has made an error in the creation of the world, and given breath to a being who can thwart His plans. We have no data from which to judge, save the revelations of history. It has certainly been the case that truth, in the sequel, has been triumphant, that light has superseded darkness, that knowledge has overcome ignorance and depravity, wherever it has been found, that in proportion as men becomes enlightened, by the various capacities of their own being, crime, wretchedness, depravity, all the evils which flesh is said to be heir to, depart. So compelled to decide between the existence of an infinite principle of good or evil, we must, from these facts, and with our views of justice, assume the former. With this this conception of Deity, as a being of infinite goodness, or infinite love, all ideas of His vengeance, His

malice, hatred, of a system of eternal punishment, every idea which is not strictly connected with the thought of a God of justice, mercy, and love, must vanish, and we have our Father, Jehovah, simply as the Ruler of the Universe, an infinite being, holding all things in his comprehension which ever have been or which shall be hereafter. And thus we have our God pictured and personified, not in any image or form, but in a divine and perfect spirit which is, and ever shall be, the life of the universe.

Then comes the proposed question,—*whether the decrees of Omnipotence in any way interfere with the free action of the human mind.* Of course, this is the long-disputed question of man's free agency, presented in different language, but expressing the same idea. With our idea of Deity, we shall endeavor to take an impartial view of the subject, not giving our opinion as infallible, but simply as our own, in accordance with our highest conceptions of truth. We conceive that the distance between the infinitude of God and the finite conceptions of man is so great, that the actions of Deity, compared with those of humanity, lose all the great ideas of comparison, that we can make nothing which man can do, or does, represent our ideas of Deity. We believe that He acts infinitely, and consequently acts upon all things in His universe,—that the same power, the same law, the same idea, which are the law, the power, the idea of *love* in that God, pulsates as near to each

heart as the throbbing of your own bosom, is near to us all as the mother to the child, as the perfume to the flower, and that this idea, that God has made everything in the infinite, while the finite mind adapts these infinite rules to the requirements of its own affections, is the direct point at issue. If Deity is infinite, and comprehends the past, the present, and the future, then He must have understood, from all time, every thing, every man, every action, which was to be in his universe. If His great mind has gone forth, in any creation or in any deep decree, then all included in that creation are under the control of the same laws. In the case of the calling forth, by His divine mind, of a higher creation, then all things of that creation must be under the influence of certain laws. And if, as the last of these productions, as the highest and most perfect on the earth, or in the universe, *the human soul* is the creation, then all human minds and souls must be under the control of the same infinite law.

But with this infinitude, there is nothing to prevent man's free agency. With this great development of the Infinite Mind, there is nothing to prevent individual aspiration. For all ideas, of all men, upon free-agency, cannot transcend the freedom of the infinite Jehovah. You can never go outside of God's universe. You may go as far as you please from any beaten track laid down by your forefathers, or by any man; you may diverge as widely as you please

from the paths of knowledge, of morals, or religion, laid down by any who have preceded you; but remember you can never go outside of Deity. You have eternally before you—you can never go beyond—that everlasting presence, that eternal Now, which stares your soul forever in the face. If man is accustomed to believe that God does not interfere with his daily matters of life, it is very well. Perhaps God, the Infinite Jehovah, is not directly present at every act you perform, but He knows the pulsations of your being, the throbbings of your heart, and never leaves you; else you would be nothing. If Jehovah were not everywhere, in every time and every place, chaos would ensue. No more could one soul exist, for one moment, without the positive presence and power of the Spirit of God, than could one star revolve in the universe, without a centre, around which to revolve. No more could the ovel of the tiniest flowers that springs, away in the desert, live without this positive principle of life, in Jehovah, than could the same star revolve without any fixed orbit, or any source of life. No more could the eagle, which seems to fly at will, and build his eyry upon the highest mountain-peak, sail in majesty and beauty through the air, without the pulsations of this Divine Spirit, than could man's physical form exist without a soul, than could the flower blossom, unless the germ is planted in the soil. No; it is useless to attempt to get away from Deity, to ascribe your

actions and thoughts to your own finite powers, or to the powers of the devil, or of any other spirit. When men, with their feeble conceptions of Deity, proclaim that humanity is a failure, that God has made a mistake in His creation, that men are becoming worse and worse, every day, we would enforce upon you this idea, — God is never so far away that the slightest pulsation of your being does not reverberate through all the aisles and corridors of eternity, as does the drop of water, when thrown into the ocean, cause the circle on the surface to expand, in beautiful undulations, over that vast extent of waters, until they reach the shore ; so each thought, and each pulsation of your life vibrates through the great ocean of His being, and not one particle but is affected thereby, not one deep element but is caused to tremble.

With this presentation of Deity, and this idea of the finite mind, we would simply call your attention, most directly and rigidly, to the specific question presented. “ Now,” says the man of business, as he plods his weary round upon the shores of Time, — “ God does not see my every thought ; God does not control my every action, or watch me in every bargain I make ; God does not stoop to direct me, either in the right or wrong way. My own free agency directs my course.” My friend, whoever you may be, you forget that notwithstanding your free-agency, you are *finite* in that agency. God is *infinite* in *His* agency.



You can be so free as, notwithstanding all the laws of God, to commit a deed which plunges you into degradation and misery. But although you may continue such a course, your freedom to do this is not outside of God's freedom to call you back. Your freedom to sin is not outside of God's freedom to fold you in His arms and proclaim you His child. The beautiful example of Jesus of Nazareth teaches us all that, notwithstanding the free-agency of every human being, there is still a principle and a power which, when called into activity, will overcome the lowest depravity. And this is a free-agency higher than any principle from which man can judge. Men forget, in their views of this subject, that they are judging from a finite stand-point; they are liable to forget that they are not God, that they are viewing it but in the light of the comprehension of their own minds, which contain only a spark, of which Deity is the living flame,—that the only perfect good is God. They are liable to forget the language of Jesus, the Christ, when they say, I am good, or this or that principle is good. They forget that there is but One good, and He the Eternal Father, that all conceptions of goodness are but relative, compared with the Eternal and Positive, that it is His light, and His sunshine, which discloses aught to man.

We would illustrate the free agency of man by an astronomical and philosophical law. We compare the human soul to the worlds that compose your solar sys-



tem. Deity we compare to the sun. You, as worlds, individually revolving around that sun; you individually revolve around an axis of your own, not by virtue of your own life and power, but by virtue of that life which is implanted in you from the influence of this central sun. Thus you contain, in essence, all the properties of the sun; thus in a finite degree, you contain what God is in the infinite. Thus you will revolve upon an axis of your own; thus you may be subject to convulsions, earthquakes, and tornadoes, in the spiritual world, but you can never cease to revolve in this orbit, must always revolve around this sun, must always be dependant upon it for your light and your heat. This is strictly man's position, in relation to Deity. You are a planet, revolving around the Eternal Father. There may be crimes and deep depravities in your spiritual nature. Your soul may beam forth but feebly, and still you must obey the law of your being which makes you subject to Him. Not one trial in the history of individuals—and the history of individuals makes up the history of the nation—not one event, but is its struggle after self-purification, in a finite degree. And this is but the preliminary to that beautiful and perfect development which shall characterize the world, after, for ages upon ages it shall have rolled in its orbit.

These are our conceptions. Man is free to do right or wrong. The truth has been presented to him, error has been presented to him; he is free to judge which

he will take ; but only free inasmuch as Deity is Infinite Goodness ; and as there is no infinite principle of evil, he cannot go in that direction beyond the moral limits of the soul, whilst in goodness he can go onward forever, to Jehovah. He is here to judge which he will take, right or wrong, but at the same time he is not free to make the wrong permanently triumphant, for it can never be so. The right is the infinite, and consequently it always predominates over ignorance, error, and darkness.

“But,” says one, “that is Universalism. It is simply the doctrine that Universalists preach.” We are not aware, precisely, what are the views entertained by Universalists, upon this subject. But, most certainly, it is *our* opinion, whether it be Universalism or the belief of any other class of men. It is certainly *our* fixed belief. Not with Universalists would we proclaim that all men, after death, are to be instantly placed in the enjoyment of perfect purity and happiness, however little they may be developed in their spiritual natures. But we will say that there can be no eternity so dark, no torment so dreadful, no hell so strong, no devil so infinite, that in God’s infinity He cannot snatch his children away from them. We do say that however deep may be the torments of man’s conscience, however depraved he may have been while in this stage of existence, however great the evils consequent upon his depravity, however men may talk of Adam and Eve, and say that the

human race is so fallen, we believe that God has not made one mistake since Time or Eternity began,—that He has not committed such an error as to make an earth filled with love and beauty, and then place upon it a depraved being, as to create all the glories of the solar system, and all the laws of solar revolutions, and all the atomic life which throbs in that vast universe, and then, when, at last, man, the acme of this creation, was placed upon the stage, to pronounce him unfit to fill his place, totally depraved. We cannot, in justice to Deity, to the Infinite God, believe it. We must believe that there is an object, an aim, in man's existence, and that that is the perfection of his individual and finite nature, that God has not made a failure, that all the worst sins of nations, all the deep crimes, all the bloodshed, and all the oppression, when weighed in the balance of truth and justice, will not be found wanting. We believe that iniquity in its lowest and most debasing forms, that crime, in its deepest haunts, where it stalks boldly by, and proclaims itself be the master of the earth, that the devil, now said to be let loose upon the earth and to be tempting humanity—that all those powers combined can never, never touch, in any degree, the perfect goodness of God, that man possesses these principles of Deity, that he is a free-agent in his possessing, in a finite degree, the goodness of the Infinite, that goodness will lead him away from all darkness, that if those who are so intent upon proving that men

are running further and further from their God, that man has degenerated since the days of Jesus of Nazareth, will but wait until eternity is over, they will learn that God triumphs over ignorance and error,—that the Christ principle, taught by Jesus, will guide all men into perfect peace and happiness, provided they are allowed to exercise their free-agency.

It is customary for men to talk about free-agency, while at the same time they blindly persist in the idea that there is but one true and perfect way to the kingdom of heaven, and that is their own way. They preach up free-agency, and tell you that you have a right to choose whichever way you will to go to heaven, but that there is but one course, and that a very difficult one. This will do to go along with the idea of predestination and foreordination, but not with the idea of an Infinite God of boundless goodness. It will do to go with the idea of those who make their idols of wood and stone, and endow them with their own tastes and appetites, but not with the spirit of the Nineteenth Century, when the minds of men are searching after the Infinite God—a God of love and mercy. O that the crown and the cross, the emblems of Jesus, the meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth, might be more respected for their true worth, and not as the signs of sects! O that the emblems of all truth might be strung around the neck of the Universe! O that the emblems of all goodness might be brilliantly pictured before your vision,

that you might see behind them the infinite and perfect goodness! O that eternity might be more comprehended! O that Time, which is said to be a monster, might be thrown aside, and that you might feel and know that the living, eternal principle is now; that in all eternity you will have but now! Act *now*. If not now, you will find that all that you call *to-morrow*, and the *future*, is but *to-day* — “the living present.” When you arrive at it, it becomes to-day — there is no to-morrow, forever. O that man’s conceptions of his freedom to do wrong might be lessened, and his conceptions of his liberty to do good enlarged! O that Deity were not circumscribed within the narrow limits of man’s being by man himself! O that the Omnipotent Jehovah were not circumscribed within the bounds of any creed, but that of all goodness, and all truth, and all beauty! that instead of instructing the children of humanity, as your teachers do, in the doctrines of depravity and eternal punishment, of total darkness, they would present pictures of goodness and beauty. It is not customary, when you would have a child judge between good and evil, to present to it pictures of the evil only. When teachers instruct pupils ignorant of the very alphabet of learning, they have to teach them the elements of the language, present all its features and endeavor to lead their minds gradually to a perception of its beauty and thus develop a wish to become acquainted with its prin-

ciples, and a love of the study in which he is to guide them. When artists desire to cultivate a perfect taste, they do not choose a dwarf or deformed person for their study, they take the most symmetrical form which can be found. So, when we would instruct a human soul in a conception of infinite goodness, we would not picture to it infinite depravity. Such a course is at war with all elements of instruction. When your religious teachers stand before you in the pulpit and address you as children, they picture to your minds infinite goodness and beauty, infinite power, infinite love, whilst at the same time they are instructing you in the alphabet of infinite evil and infinite depravity. Where the consistency between the lesson and the teacher, between the object to be accomplished and that which is presented to you? Where the consistency between the idea of love and hate, perfect goodness and perfect evil? To our minds, there is nothing reasonable in blind devotion to such instruction. Each and every one of you, who are free agents, should judge who shall be your teachers, and what shall be your lessons. If each one of you begin this hour, this moment, to contemplate humanity with an eye for positive goodness, beauty, and perfectness, you will find it. If you commence, this day, to study the evils and errors of humanity, you may go on forever, and always find evils and errors. If you would begin now to exercise your own judgment as to who and what shall be

your lessons and teachers, you must commence, with the elements of justice in your own soul. You must reason from all things that yield light and beauty, from those faculties of man's nature which make him true and perfect, which make the diversity which exists in manhood. All nature is characterized by diversity. No two grains of sand, or pebbles, upon the sea-shore, can be found exactly alike. No two leaves upon the same tree can be found without some difference. And yet no one of them quarrels with the other because it is not like itself. Each fulfilling the objects of its own being, revolves in the Universe without once questioning the objects of another's existence. No two souls are made to perform the same part upon the earth ; else why was humanity ? It is not good, if your brother, your sister, your friend differs with you, in opinion, in education, or life, for you to judge that they are not acting highly and purely. The judge is God. He, the Infinite, is the One who guideth and who judgeth.

We proclaim, notwithstanding all the deep elements of orthodox religion opposed to us, that there is not one crime, not one degree of depravity or wretchedness, however low, not one, which cannot be overcome by knowledge. Therefore, the only object which you should have in view, is to acquire knowledge, by whatever means. If the knowledge of your friend causes him to differ from yourself, he, like a star, is free to revolve in whatever orbit he



pleases, provided he does not interfere with yours; and you are likewise free, on the same condition. Each man has a right to his peculiar wishes and affections, provided they do not interfere with those of his neighbors. When they do, the two are to weigh them in the balances together, and make an equilibrium. But in a perfect state all men's desires would lead them to do the right always, and none could then interfere with the wishes of another.

If the Committee is not satisfied with our elucidation, or if there are any further inquiries in relation to this subject, we will reply to any questions which may be offered.

If there are none, we will only say we thank you for your kind attention. We have presented our highest ideas on the theme suggested. If we have interfered with your own opinions, pardon us. Ours is the freedom to express our views, yours the freedom to reject them.

And if, in the bright and eternal future which is before us all, the conception of all knowledge and the embodiment of all truth shall be given to us, the blessing shall be to Thee, Infinite God, for as much of truth as we have received and shall receive. From Thee we have obtained the spark of heavenly light; we send it back to Thee, knowing that Thou canst not render it bright and joyous, that Thou canst kindle



the spark into a living flame. And thus we bless  
Thee, forever and forever.

The services were then closed by the following  
Chant:—

THE angels are singing,  
The angels are winging  
    Their course from the sky.  
They stoop, on soft pinions,  
They bring the bright minions  
    Of eternity.

O, they touch their harp-strings  
With gentle chords of love!  
O, the blessed cadence  
    Sounding from above!  
Mortals, join the chorus—  
Mortals, join the chorus—  
Hallelujah! hallelujah!  
    God is love!

Angels whisper gently  
To the sons of earth,  
Angels murmur softly,  
“Mourn not for the lost.”  
Angels come forever  
On the wings of love;  
Angels leave you never,  
Murmuring, “God is love.”

Mortals, join the chorus,  
From the spheres of love;  
Angels ever singing,—  
    Mortal friends, good-night!  
    Good-night, good-night, good-night.

## POEM,

BY MRS. CORA L. V. HATCH.



AWAKE! my soul's fond lyre,  
 And kindle on thy altar there  
 The flames of that immortal fire  
 Which knows of Deity, and where  
 He keeps the watches of His love,  
 In realms of light and power above.

Oh, how the finite grasps  
 For something of His power and might,  
 And firmly seem the fates to clasp;  
 The spirit's zone and darkest night,  
 Seems brooding o'er the thought and mind,  
 It searches for the light it cannot find.

There is a *past* we know,  
 Who dwelt therein we ne'er can tell;  
 The flowers of the summer grow,  
 And perfumes murmur, "All is well."  
 The flower cannot comprehend its life,  
 The human soul knows not the cause of strife.

There is a *now*; we feel  
 A wondrous power, and strength, and might;  
 We act and think, our minds reveal  
 The mysteries of Heaven so bright.  
 God smiles upon us, pitying our woe,  
 We seem to think that He hath told us so.

There is a *future* vast —

We know not what it is, but only feel  
A radiance is on our weary spirits cast—  
And melodies from unseen harp-strings steal :  
A mystery, a grandeur and a power is there,  
We know no more of that Hereafter there.

God is our life and love —

We know no more of Him, and feel no less,  
He lives around, beneath, beside, above,  
And cheers the child of deep distress.  
If he has Goodness, it is Infinitely Great,  
No other power an *evil* can create.

We live but in His breath,

Thus our eternal souls can never die,  
Infinite *Life* can give itself no death,  
Infinite Truth can never make us lie,—  
Our souls are free, but in His freedom blessed;  
Our souls are love, and by his love caressed.

The soul is free to live,

And free to love, for God is love, —  
Free to do good, for He is perfect good;  
And free to soar to realms of light above,—  
Not free to sin, for sin is slavery's chain;  
Can *Slavery* and Freedom hand in hand remain?

Thus we are His children,

He is our Father and our God,  
In Him we can become all good;  
Without Him we were nought; His rod  
Waves like a magic wand over us all,  
“Come children, come,” is the Great Father's call.