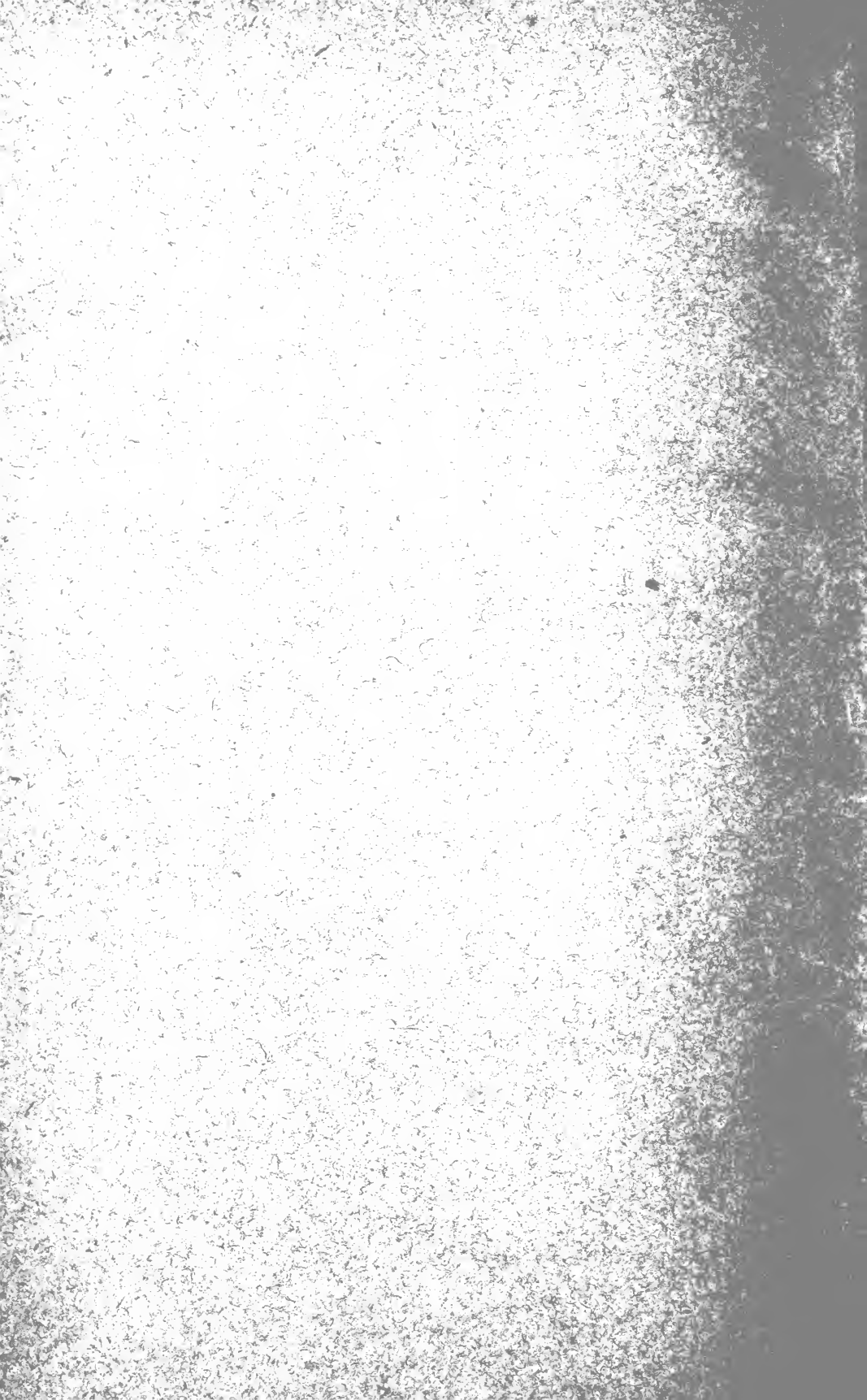


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THE
DEATH OF DEATH

OR

A STUDY OF GOD'S HOLINESS IN CONNECTION WITH
THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL, IN SO FAR AS
INTELLIGENT AND RESPONSIBLE
BEINGS ARE CONCERNED.

BY

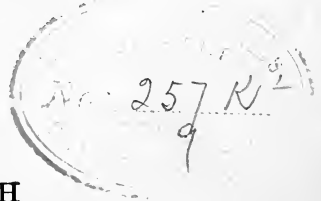
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John M. Patton
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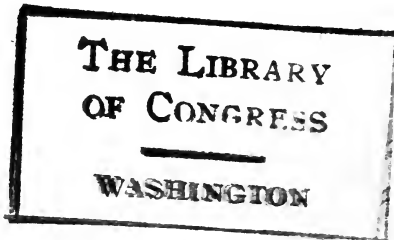
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MS
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P R E F A C E.

To the preparation of this essay have been devoted the hours that could be economised from various other engagements, during a part of the year just passed.

It was almost entirely finished before the writer was aware of the discussion which has sprung up recently in the pulpits and religious newspapers of England and America on the subject of future punishment. While, therefore, it was prepared without any reference to that discussion, its publication has thereby become opportune.

The first part is devoted chiefly to the presentation of the *negative* side of the argument, or to removing the errors and misunderstandings which seem to present impediments to a candid consideration of the question. The *positive* side of the argument is fully set forth in the second part, though it is foreshadowed in the first.

Should the conclusions we have reached meet with any active opposition, we respectfully ask three things of any one, if there be any one, who shall *be offended* by them—

First. That he will not criticise the book until he has read it.

Second. Nor till he has taken pains to understand the extent and limits of the argument.

Third. That he will not, as is so often done, set up “men of straw” of his own, and claim, when he has triumphantly knocked them down again, that he has answered us; but will candidly and fairly examine the arguments that

are here set forth, instead of those which he may choose, without any good reason, to impute to us.

The book is the fruit of deep and solemn convictions. We humbly trust that it casts some of the benign beams of eternal truth into the dark places of the moral world; that it dispels some of the clouds and darkneses which have so long hung over the problem of evil; and that it gilds with at least some little of the "light from heaven" the true relations of man to his Creator.

Our unceasing prayers shall go up that it may be owned and blessed by Him, whose aid in its preparation has been unceasingly sought, or else, if not according to His will, that it may be brought to naught.

January, 1878.

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ERRATA.

- Page 11, 15th line from bottom, for *did know* read *did not know*.
18, lines 11, 13, strike out quotation marks.
21, 11th line from bottom, for *this*, read *thee*.
22, 4th and 5th lines, put in quotation marks, "as well might pigmies lift a mountain from the sea."
23, 1st line, for *molded*, read *moulded*.
25, 18th line, for *lent*, read *bent*.
37, 11th line from bottom, for *had*, read *has*.
46, 7th line, for *adherance*, read *adherence*.
46, 12th line from bottom, for *ipsi*, read *ipse*.
46, 9th line from bottom, for *four*, read *few*.
63, 4th line, for ἀκατάλυτος, read ἀκατάλυτος.
70, 14th line from bottom, for ἀιδίος, read ἀϊδίος.
96, 14th line, for *is*, read *are*.
98, 14th line from bottom, for *union*, read *unison*.
108, 14th line from bottom, for *pityeth*, read *pitieth*.
118, last line, for *has Carcassonne*, read *has his Carcassonne*.
119, 3d line, for *possession*, read *possession*.
125, last line, for *betittleing*, read *belittling*.
136, 10th line from bottom, for *detre* read *d'etre*.
140, 12th line, for *or*, read *on*.
143, 7th line from bottom, for *each*, read *every*.
144, 11th line from bottom, for *replyest*, read *repliest*.
160, 6th and 7th lines, for *state knowledge*, read *state of knowledge*.
164, 5th line from bottom, for *the*, read *they*.
170, 1st line, for *no*, read *on*.
174, 9th line from bottom, for *second*, read *second*.
181, 16th line, for *theoglogians*, read *theologians*.
188, 9th line, for *be made far more realistic*, read *be far more keenly realized*.

PART I.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL NOT CAPABLE OF SOLUTION
ON THE BASIS OF A HOPELESS FUTURE PUNISH-
MENT, OR OF ANNIHILATION.

THE DEATH OF DR. JAMES

CHAPTER I

The death of Dr. James was a great event in the history of the city. He had been a prominent member of the community for many years, and his passing was felt by all who knew him. The funeral was held in the city hall, and a large number of people attended. The services were conducted with the usual solemnity and reverence. The body was buried in the city cemetery, and the grave was marked with a simple stone. The death of Dr. James was a great loss to the city, and his memory will be long and fondly remembered.

THE DEATH OF DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY NARRATIVE AND STATEMENT OF THE QUESTION.

ON a range of elevated hills about three miles from Alexandria, in the State of Virginia, and commanding an extensive and beautiful bird's eye view of that town, of Washington city, of the Potomac river and of the adjacent country, stands the Theological Seminary of the Protestant Episcopal Church of the diocese.

A little more than thirty-five years ago there stood on the same range of hills on either side of the Seminary, and distant from it a quarter and half a mile respectively, two large schools for boys. One of these schools still exists there, growing in vigor and usefulness as its years increase.

The boys of these two schools worshiped at the Seminary chapel, located on the central hill of the range on which the three stood, and the two tides of buoyant and vigorous youth met and mingled within its walls on Sabbath mornings and evenings, and at other seasons, each receiving and bestowing the inevitable sympathies of such association. On the boys of these two schools were exerted ceaselessly the holy influences of God's blessed Word, intensified in their effects by the heavenly atmosphere of this "School of the Prophets" which lay between

them—an atmosphere which, to the spiritually-minded, seemed a perpetual incense crowning that favored hill, and rising up, day and night, in grateful adoration to God. At least thus it seemed to one of those boys who lived there for five years, from 1838 to 1843; and, as in after life, even to this day, he has looked forth on this sad earth, and has seen five generations of the heralds of the cross who left that hill while he was there, bearing the glad tidings of God's peace with man, and planting the Rose of Sharon in every desert land, he has felt and still feels that what to him was then seeming only, was in truth a great *reality*. For these thirty-five years, in America, in Europe, in Asia, in Africa and in the "isles of the sea," these five generations of Christian champions have waged perpetual war against the kingdom of "sin, Satan and death," and revealed the glorious light of the "Sun of Righteousness" to those who "sit in darkness." Some of them, veteran soldiers of the "King of Kings," still fight in the fore-front of this life-long battle; while the greater part, at His command, have sheathed their swords, yielded their places to younger soldiers and have themselves entered into the full blaze of that uncreated light, which, with feebler rays, once attended their steps and lit up the gloom of sin and sorrow which surrounded them here.

In addition to the sacred influences of the place itself, it was frequently favored, from time to time, by the presence of distinguished preachers—Bishops and Presbyters—from all parts of the country, on official and other visits, bringing with them fresh sheaves of holy zeal, of prayer, of praise, and of the manna of the Word, all ripened by mature experience and increase of faith and love. Such means of grace as were enjoyed there could not, surely, be surpassed on earth; and, doubtless, thousands have looked

back on that trysting place of the saints—one at least has—as a very Pisgah, from which were often caught bright glimpses of the “promised land.”

On one of his official visits, during the period stated, the late venerable Bishop Meade, of Virginia, occupied the pulpit, and preached from the text: “Escape for thy life: look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain lest thou be consumed” (Gen. xix, 17). That sermon lingers in the memory to this day. It produced a tremendous effect on scores of youthful minds and hearts, as well as upon those of riper years. The Bishop returned to the discharge of other duties in various parts of his large diocese, but left behind him a most profound interest and anxiety about spiritual things. The opportunity was not to be lost. Religious services, prayer meetings, sermons, were multiplied. Distinguished preachers came from different directions to participate, and the impressions made by the Bishop’s address were deepened and prolonged by every means in the power of the Christian ministers and people of the neighborhood. As might have been expected, many who had scarcely bestowed a thought on their soul’s salvation were brought under the influence of sacred truths; while many, who were faithful before, were refreshed and quickened. For months these scenes went on, and the effect on the two schools was wonderful. Many, of course, afterwards fell away, but others could date from that period, their earnest attention to the subject of religion.

All this was good—how good we shall only know hereafter—but now is to be mentioned that without which this book would never have been written.

Unfortunately, in that day more than in this, the doctrine of exquisite and unending punishment was considered

the most effectual weapon that could be wielded from the pulpit, and was taught with the energy and described with the painful minuteness of the mediæval age. The gates of hell were constantly kept open, and the lurid glare of its pitiless fires was cast upon trembling congregations with relentless pertinacity. Among the ministers who visited our "hill of Zion" in this period were some whose preaching was of this type. Their chief force was expended on this theme, and souls already seeking to escape the burden of their sins, and feeling their way after Christ, were so shocked and terrified, that their eyes were kept fixed on the abyss below instead of being lifted in love to him who bore their sins for them "in his own body on the tree."

It is impossible to record here the spiritual experiences of various individuals during this eventful period—time would fail to do so. One case only, better known than that of others, will be recorded.

Among those who attended one of these schools was a youth of about fifteen years of age. Perhaps Samuel's mother did not give him to the Lord with a more yearning desire that he would accept the gift, than did the mother of this boy from the day of his birth. At this early age he believed himself a Christian. He knew no period of his life that he did not look up to God as his Father, and feel that he was reconciled to him by the blood of Christ. He rejoiced at the religious interest around him, and greatly enjoyed the increased earnestness and zeal manifested on every hand in the prayers and praises of the people of God. He had not as yet been confirmed, waiting for that purpose, whether right or wrong, a maturer age. Now, of course, the subject pressed earnestly on him, and would have ended in his confirmation, but for the distress of mind excited by the preaching above referred to.

He heard learned, eloquent and holy men, to whom he looked up with reverence, constantly pouring out in dismal tones the dirges of the damned. They went into the minutest particulars, dissecting the lost soul and displaying its quivering nerves, agonized beneath the relentless wrath of God. Illustrations such as these were constantly employed:

You know what exquisite agony it is to burn your finger, how it aches and throbs with almost intolerable anguish—now imagine your whole body bathed in a fierce undying flame, and conceive, if you can, the unutterable torture to which you will be subjected; while all the time the blazing eye of an offended God is bent in vengeance on your smitten soul. Could you endure one instant of it? Will you neglect to come to Him now at the risk of such hideous and everlasting ruin? Ah! that's the worst of it—*everlasting* woe, *never-ending* fire, torture unspeakable and *eternal*. And consider what eternity is. A school-session seems a long time to you—a lifetime seems to you almost unending—but this is nothing to eternity. If it should be your dismal fate to sink into that dreadful abyss of hideous ruin, you will spend a lifetime, yea, many lifetimes, *but eternity will have just begun*. You will abide there till after the story of this world shall have been told, till sun, moon and stars shall have been burned up, till the elements shall have melted with fervent heat, and the heavens shall have rolled together like a scroll; but *eternity will have just begun*. Millions and billions of *ages* will roll away over your devoted head, and these multiplied by countless millions and billions more shall pass away; but to your agonized cry—“How long shall these intolerable burnings eat into my soul?”—the dreadful voice of your “Father in Heaven,” with appalling thunder, shall reply—“*Eternity has just begun*,

and it shall never, never see an end of your well-deserved misery and despair. Hope has never entered your drear abode, nor can her lightsome wing cross the dread abyss between you and this heavenly land." And then His dreadful eye shall blaze through and through all the dark secrets of your soul, and you will lie still, paralyzed by that awful gaze—the helpless victim of eternal death.

In this style many solemn services were saddened; and subdued souls shrank away in dreadful horror at their liability to miss the "narrow way" and fall into this broad and dismal gulf—the descent to which was described to be so easy that by far the largest portion of mankind would surely sink beneath its waves. It was not a wholesome fear, such as a true interpretation and presentment of God's holy word is sure to produce; but a dumb, paralyzing fear that crushed sensitive souls, and made the bold and skeptical blaspheme. God was painted sometimes (of course unconsciously by the preacher) as a remorseless tyrant, but at the same time described as just—much in the same way, though not in the same terms, as Melancthon once maintained that "God wrought all things, evil as well as good;" that he was "the author of David's adultery and the treason of Judas, as well as of Paul's conversion." Sometimes sermons were preached describing an offended God, in tone, if not in words, as bad as the following from a sermon—"Sinners in the hands of an angry God"—by even so great and good a man as Jonathan Edwards: "He will crush you under his feet without mercy; He will crush out your blood and make it fly, and it shall be sprinkled on His garments so as to stain all his raiment. He will not only hate you, but He will have you in the utmost contempt," &c. Inspired wisdom (Isaiah lxiii, 3) uses a portion of this language in a highly figurative de-

scription of the triumph of Christ over the Gentile enemies of Jerusalem or of his church. But here, man dares to add to it; to apply it enlarged, intensified and *literally* to God's alleged rage and vengeance against *the individual sinner*; and to paint the great and good Jehovah as crushing under His feet *without mercy* His helpless creature—*crushing out his blood and making it fly*.

Under such preaching the display of the love of Christ, which was faithfully and tenderly made, lost nearly all its force. The shocked and terrified soul could not see it in its true beauty and power, through the murky mists and fogs thus cast around it.

The effect of such teaching on the youth, whose spiritual experiences we are describing, was unutterably horrible. He had looked habitually on the benigner side of spiritual truth. He had looked on God as his "Father in Heaven," and in raising his eyes by night or by day to the firmament above him, or looking around him upon earth, he could see written everywhere in rainbow beauty over his visible universe, on matter and on man, in the light of His holy word, that alluring and inspiring truth "*God is Love*"—a truth older than when "the stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy"—a truth beaming from the primeval councils of the Eternal Trinity, but only manifested in its full beauty and amazing glory when the Divine Redeemer "tasted death for every man" (Heb. ii, 9).

The new teaching he was now receiving, the new revelation of God, made to him by those whom he justly revered, and whose arguments he was unable to answer, filled him with dismay—not for himself, for he believed that he was safe in Christ, but at the overthrow of his sweet visions of the Father's face, at the dreadful question, "was he indeed such as he was described?" At first

appalled, and then stunned as by a sudden blow, he ceased almost to think, his joy in God withered like a flower beneath a hoar-frost, he lost all interest in the sports or occupations of boyhood, he frequented solitudes—in thickets, in garrets and in desert places—seeking rest and finding none; agonizing for peace in prayers which seemed not to penetrate the heavens, but to rebound as from a brazen sky. Thus he suffered from a sense of untold loneliness and desertion; as a child in outer darkness, who wails for the guidance of its father's hand.

And so long months of anguish passed, until it seemed that if it should continue indefinitely, his reason would give way and the darkness of utter nothingness would settle down around him. Meantime, his interest in religious things being known, he was repeatedly invited to be a candidate for confirmation; but to the surprise of others, he sadly declined without assigning any reason for it. In truth, he feared now that he was a hardened sinner, obstinate, self-willed, and, perhaps, possessed of the devil, since he did not accept with joy, but groaned in spirit, and struggled against a recognition of God as now disclosed to him. He felt that he did not believe what had been preached, and fought against his unbelief. He did not dare deliberately to repudiate it or to search into these great questions. He feared he might be guilty of blasphemous presumption in doing so. He even feared that he was an atheist or an infidel, setting up idols of his own for worship, instead of bowing down in humble self-renunciation before the true God of heaven and earth, who had been disclosed to him in his most fearful attributes by his ministers, in order that he might be aroused from his fond dreams, and seek the salvation of his soul in a different way from that which he had hitherto believed the

right way. He therefore kept all his sad and troubled thoughts shut up in his own bosom. When Christian ministers and others tendered their sympathy and aid and sought his confidence, he did not extend it to them, because he was unwilling that his unbelief and hardness of heart should be known to them; for he felt that he could not make them understand the whole case, and that they would condemn him, and so increase his misery instead of comforting him. To God alone was he willing to confess it all; for though he scarcely knew now whether he prayed to the God of his childhood or the God of late revealed to him, yet down in his heart of heart he felt that the Father of all was still his Father; that He knew the end from the beginning; that he knew all his secret motives, and saw and sympathized with his helpless creature struggling for light, and feeling after him if haply he might find him.

As before said, he had been stunned, and therefore for a long time he did not know precisely the cause of his condition. Besides, his wearied mind and heart shrank like an exposed nerve from an analysis of his thoughts. It was only after long months of dumb, still suffering, and then gradually, step by step, that he was enabled to realize and define plainly to himself the causes of his malady.

At last it shaped itself in his mind thus:

First. He had been taught by those who were beyond doubt striving to know God for themselves and in order that they might teach others; by those whom he justly loved and revered as ministers of Christ's gospel; by those who were his saints, as surely as were any on earth or in heaven, that the God whom he worshiped with the simple faith of childhood as a God of love—love infinite and divine to all His creatures on earth—was in truth a God of

love to only a portion of them, such as should come to Christ *in this brief life*, but was a God of vengeance, infinite, divine, unending and inexorable, to the far larger number.

Second. If this were so, the question came with resistless force, in spite of the dread of offending God—in spite of the dread that it was a suggestion of the devil—in spite of conscious weakness of finite intellect and ignorance of things Divine—why, then, did the God of love, of infinite tenderness, of boundless compassion, *create* unending millions of beings, endowed with exquisite capacity for joy or sorrow, for happiness or misery; endowed even with divine capacity for them, because made “in his image, after his likeness,” when he foreknew in the councils of eternity, that the large majority of them would, the *moment* after their creation (for life is but a moment in the eternal scale), sink into utter and hopeless mortal and immortal agony, to endure as long as God himself should exist?

He thus found himself confronting that dread question, which has perplexed the ages, but which had never given him a moment's uneasiness before—the question of the *Origin of Evil*.

The preachers, above-mentioned, had repeatedly asked and answered this question in the course of their sermons, and their answers had always been “we cannot tell except by saying *it is the will of God*.” But this gave no peace. He had read what Pollock said of it in “The Course of Time”:

“In mind, in matter, much was difficult
To understand : but what in deepest night
Retired ; inscrutable, mysterious, dark,
Was *evil* ; God's decrees ; and deeds decreed
Responsible. Why God, the just and good,

Omnipotent and wise, should suffer sin
 To rise. Why man was free, accountable ;
 Yet God foreseeing, overruling all.
 Where'er the eye could turn, whatever track
 Of moral thought it took, by reason's torch,
 Or Scripture's led, before it still this mount
 Sprung up, impervious, insurmountable ;
 Above the human stature rising far ;
 Horizon of the mind—surrounding still
 The vision of the soul with clouds and gloom.
 Yet did they oft attempt to scale its sides,
 And gain its top. * * * * *
 To pass it was no doubt desirable ;
 And few of any intellectual size,
 That did not sometime in their day attempt ;
 But all in vain ; for as the distant hill,
 Which on the right, or left, the traveler's eye
 Bounds, seems advancing as he walks, and oft
 He looks, and looks, and thinks to pass ; but still
 It forward moves and mocks his baffled sight,
 Till night descends and wraps the scene in gloom ;
 So did this moral height the vision mock ;
 So lifted up its dark and cloudy head
 Before the eye, and met it evermore."

Deeply did our youthful sufferer feel the truth of all this, on the theory of God's moral government which had alarmed him. He felt in his inmost soul that that theory had wrapt in the gloom of a rayless night all the scenery of earth and heaven which had hitherto gladdened his eyes. But both his mind and heart repelled that theory. He now remembered that our blessed Saviour had said "Search *the Scriptures*, for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which *testify of me*" (John v, 39). He therefore ventured at last, before abandoning himself to despair, to examine the question for himself as well as he could, in the light of his feeble and immature

reason, guided and chastened by the very word of God himself. But his effort was, for the present, vain. The burden he had borne had broken his springs, and the mind, unable to bear the intolerable load any longer, ceased to exert itself, and settled down into stolid inaction or restless rest. No formal effort was afterwards made to grapple vigorously and decisively with his difficulty; but gradually, by meditation, prayer, and the reading of God's Word alone (for on this subject he read no other book), light dawned ray by ray upon his soul, till in about ten years after that gloomy night had settled down upon him, his whole firmament was radiant with peace and beauty and perfect repose, in the consciousness of God's love and mercy indissolubly bound up with his justice, in the consciousness that justice and mercy are only human terms for the same Divine attribute.

If we are not deceived in supposing that this result was not a delusion—if peace was really and *fairly* obtained after these ten years of sorrow and suffering, then surely the mode in which it was secured is important to be known. How, then, was it obtained? As usual in all such cases, by the simplest means—by eliminating from the accepted dogma nothing of all its terrible proportions but the single element of *hopelessness*.

First, then, he accepts with others the awful truth of eternal punishment; but he *accepts* it with the limitations prescribed alike by reason and by Scripture. He believes that sin, with all its consequences in this life and the next, alike, has for its sole and terrible end alienation from God, who is the Life, and that so long as that alienation exists, whether here or hereafter, so long will its consequences—shame and misery, by the Scriptures called death—exist; that if the one be unending, so also is the other; that if

sin be unending, so also will be condemnation; or, in other words, sin unending *is* death unending; that *this* is the Scripture meaning of eternal punishment—a punishment co-existing with the sinful state; but that though eternal in this sense, it is not *necessarily* unending, because death does not destroy any of man's capacities, whether that of repentance or other, and because we are warranted both by Scripture and by reason to believe that if *at any time* any of God's creatures should *seek* restoration to his favor, infinite compassion would respond. He does not think reason or Scripture forbid us to suppose man capable of repentance in another world, and that alone is the condition of reconciliation to God through Christ in this world or the next. Finally, he believes that if the sole and terrible end of sin is alienation from God, and the consequent destruction of the harmony of His universe, so much more is the sole and unspeakable glorious end of the sacrifice of the Son of God, the reconciliation of the creature with the Creator, and the consequent restoration of that harmony.

Second. On the concession that future misery in the world to come, though eternal, in a certain sense, is not *necessarily* unending; that though unspeakably terrible and of indefinite duration, it is not *necessarily* hopeless; that in the future, as in the present, it results from sin, and is coterminous with it; that repentance and return to Christ are the eternally ordained antidotes to the poison of sin—the goodness and love of God in the creation of man can be demonstrated, even in connection with the existence of evil. Nay, more, it can be shown that though God is not responsible for the existence of evil, except in so far as the creation of a free agent has made him so, yet that its existence has been turned into a blessing, not merely for a portion of man-

kind, but for every intelligent creature "in heaven and in earth and under the earth."

The following chapters are designed to display the argument by which these conclusions are established. They have brought unspeakable repose on these great questions for now more than a quarter of a century to one suffering soul. If by God's grace their rehearsal shall do the same for other sufferers, surely years of suffering would be amply compensated.

If the argument is based on sound reason, and supported by a true interpretation of the Scriptures, as it is believed to be, it is founded on a rock. If it be not so supported, it is worth nothing, however sound it may appear in the light of reason alone.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE AND DEATH.

IN any effort to ascertain the character of the future state, it is essential that we should first discover the nature of life and death in general. Without a clear understanding on this point we shall vainly endeavor to comprehend that future state, or even to know how there can be any future state at all. Confusion of thought on the threshold has produced here, as in all cases, much of the existing error on the whole subject. Let us then patiently search for a true view of these wonderful phenomena.

Every man and woman of ordinary intelligence sometimes asks, with anxious foreboding—"Whence am I? Whither am I going? What is to be the end of this strange existence? Where shall I be when dissolution closes up this mortal career?" These momentous questions have gone up from the human heart ever since man was created. They make up the universal cry. They force themselves in our hours of pleasure, and blend themselves inextricably with all our sorrows. In times of bereavement, of loss, of perplexity, and especially of danger, they spring up spontaneously and demand an answer. Even the most degraded heathen, sunk in midnight darkness, vainly asks of heaven and earth the meaning of life, and peers anxiously into the unknown future.

If we consider these questions from a merely *human* stand-point, we are haunted by myriads of dark and doubtful surmises. Like children moving with beating

hearts and trembling steps through long-deserted and dust-covered halls in the ghostly twilight, we are terrified by mysterious voices, and still more mysterious silences. Even that prince of philosophers and moralists, the peerless Socrates, here found his sublime and life-long wisdom to be little better protection against alarm than the ignorance of the little child whom he so much resembled in humility. His glorious dreams of immortality were, at last, mere dreams, mere trembling hopes, as he himself confessed.

Modern science has extended its "discoveries in every direction throughout the visible and invisible universe, but throws no light on these great questions." What has it not achieved? It has measured the earth from pole to pole, mapped it out into scientific Empires, Kingdoms and Provinces; and told the story of everything on its surface, in its caves, and on its mountain tops. It has analyzed the waters of all the oceans, and become familiar with its multiform inhabitants. It has laid off on its restless and fickle waves great highways for the monarch ships, and marked these highways with invisible but easily-read mileposts. It has asked of the subtle winds, and the winds have answered whither they went, and have then been harnessed to every out-going ship, enabling it to select with certainty that which would bear it most safely and quickly to its desired port. It has descended into the bowels of the earth and of the ocean; forced from the reluctant womb of the one all the treasures carefully hoarded there during its long travail, and from the opened maw of the other its primeval secrets. It has tunnelled the one for highways at its will, and on the low lying spinal column of the other it has strung a little nerve that throbs with vital force, and unites in the bonds of instant communica-

tion worlds divided by its waste of waters. It has bowed down over a little piece of magic crystal, and new worlds of active life have sprung from the invisible as if created by it. It has weighed the sun with his whole system to a pound. It has analyzed the very materials of which he is composed, and told his separate and compound elements. It has defined his multiform motions—axial, spiral, orbital. It has catalogued the stars, and made them familiar acquaintances—noting their composition, distances, and stupendous movements. It has turned its wondrous glasses on little mist-spots scattered in great numbers through the sky, but scarcely distinguishable from refracted star-light—and lo! from abysmal depths new firmaments have broken out in almost intolerable splendor, radiant with a Divine beauty, and so suggestive of the “music of the spheres,” that in man’s deep soul he seems to hear as still prolonged the choral songs which were raised when the “morning stars sang together.”

Take an example—a golden shield of packed suns in the constellation Hercules. When Sir William Herschel saw it for the first time through his great reflector, “it almost made him leap with mingled astonishment and delight.” An eminent astronomer doubts “whether any person ever saw it for the first time through a large telescope without a shout of wonder.” Light flying at the rate of 192,060 miles a second has taken 2,000 years to reach us from this object of wonderful glory. But this amazing distance is almost within hand-reach of us as compared with others of those little mist-spots of which we have spoken. There is a nebula in Andromeda. It is “easily shown to be so far away that the light by which we see it must show it as it was at least a million years ago, instead of as it is to-night. The rays have been all

this time charging across the void at the rate of 192,000 miles a second," and its breadth across the sky is 30,000 years as light flies. In this survey "the fifty-three-foot reflector is surveyor-general, and a light sprite carries the chain." (*Vid Ecce Cœlum*, pp. 139-146.)

Professor Mitchel, in a lecture on astronomy, after reviewing its mighty facts, said that it seemed to him that the "wild dream of the German poet (Jean Paul Richter) was more than realized." God called man into the vestibule of Heaven, saying, "Come up higher, and I will show you the glory of my house," and to His angels that stood about the throne, He said—"take him, strip him of his robes of flesh; cleanse his affections; put a new breath into his nostrils, but touch not his human heart—the heart that fears and hopes and trembles." A moment, and it was done; and the man stood ready for his unknown voyage. Under the guidance of a mighty angel, with sounds of flying pinions, they sped away from the battlements of heaven. Sometime, on the mighty angels' wings, they fled through Saharas of darkness, wildernesses of death. At length, from a distance not counted save in the arithmetic of heaven, light beamed upon them—a sleepy flame, as seen through a fleecy cloud. They sped on their terrible speed to meet the light; the light with lesser speed came to meet them. In a moment the blazing of suns around them—a moment the wheeling of planets: then came long eternities of twilights; then again appeared more constellations, one succeeding another around their path, above, below, and on either hand in countless numbers, in endless complexity of amazing forms and magnitudes, and with intervening infinitudes of darkness and of space.

Suddenly, as thus they sped from eternity to eternity

over abysmal worlds, a cry arose that systems more mysterious, worlds more billowy, other heights and other depths, were coming, were nearing, were at hand. At last the man sank down shuddering, and weeping, and crying "Angel, I can go no further; insufferable is the glory of God; let me lie down in the grave and hide myself from the Infinitude of the Universe, for end there is none." "End is there none?" demanded the angel. And from the glittering stars that shone around, there came a choral shout "End, is there none?" "End is there none?" again demanded the angel, "and it is this that awes thy soul? I answer, end is there none to the universe of God! Lo! also, there is no beginning."

Man's restless research has looked into all these deep things; nor is this all. Every object in heaven and earth has been analyzed by his chemistry—the invisible air, the upper firmament, light, heat and electricity have yielded up to him a larger or smaller portion of their secrets; and when chemistry has failed, the far more subtle analysis of an induction that seems to have no limits to its capacity has pushed his researches into fields thought hitherto to be inaccessible, until we are ready to exclaim "the spirit of the Holy God is in this."

But though man has done all this, there is one thing he has not done, nor will ever do—that spirit does not permit. He has never explored the secret of *Life*. He has sought diligently, by chemical action and reaction, by searching and purifying fires, by microscopic dissection, but has sought in vain, to find the ultimate germ of that mysterious force—*vitality*. Not only a true and reverent science has sought it, but "science falsely so-called" has coveted this great secret, not that it might shed more light upon the truth of God, but that it might itself excite this force,

and so eliminate God from his universe and dispense with a creator. With this view, ungodly men have toiled patiently, with eager desire and with infernal aid, to unravel this mystery. As well might pigmies lift a mountain from the sea! Door after door they have opened, veil after veil they have raised; but still that awful mystery abides in the "Holy of Holies"—the bosom of God. Let them exhaust their efforts, let them test to the utmost the ultimate molecules of gases, and vapors, and spirits, and subtle essences,—they cannot analyze *the breath of God!*

It is not only modern science, whether true or "falsely so-called," that has longed for the solution of this mysterious life, and of the still more mysterious death by which it is invariably followed. The great philosophers of all antiquity—notably those of Athens—whose cultivated intellects sowed their firmaments with great lights that still sparkle down the centuries even to our own time—expended all their powers in anxious though futile efforts to solve this great mystery. If, then, modern science; if the wisdom of the mighty dead of the past; if the traditions of buried empires, around whose very tombs still lingers after the lapse of millenniums a halo of intellectual light, can give us no aid—whither shall we turn for help? Shall we turn to the atheist, and let him answer for us that there is no God; that we are the victims of some blind fate, and that after a few more years we shall go down into the grave to "lie in cold obstruction and to rot," and that we shall then be no more at all? Shall we go to the eclectic philosopher, and let him answer for us that nothing exists; that we are dreams; that all things else are dreams, and that our future, whatever else it may be, will only be a dream of dreams? Shall we go to the materialist, and learn from him, as well as his jargon will permit, that we

are not dreams at all, but mere lumps of matter, molded into their present shapes by a concourse of attractions, repulsions and other forces; and that by a change in the relations and dependencies of the different parts of these lumps of matter, they will some day be infinitely subdivided again, and that throughout endless ages we will be diversifying with our scattered molecules, clouds and vapors, and worlds and suns? Alas! there is no food for the hungry, no drink for the thirsty, no rest for the weary here.

Is there, then, *no* solution of the question? Are we indeed involved in hopeless doubt and gloom? Has this long wail of human woe gone up for six thousand years, only to be lost in space, or met by the heartless echoes of preceding cries of anguish? Are we indeed the helpless occupants of a sad and ruined world, cast off by some blind fate, and doomed to wander aimlessly and without a destiny in the abysses of a boundless space? Oh! if this be so, what dismay, what horror of great darkness should possess our souls! Well may we shudder at the hideous "science, falsely so-called," which, even at this day, would invite us to eat and drink with the vain philosophy of the Epicurean; or to spin out our days with the indifference of the stoic; which would consign us to such frigid thoughts, such outer darkness. Let us turn then from the cold and cheerless regions we have been exploring and enter into another sphere; into an atmosphere all the more bright and glowing, by reason of the contrasted gloom. Let us lift up our hearts in praise and adoration to the great Creator of heaven and earth, and bless his holy name that *he has revealed himself to us by his sacred Word.*

Now *mark.* That Word contains, as we have seen, the *only light* we have on these great questions. If it be not

true, we are in midnight darkness still. But surely there is *some* light there, whether it be more or less, *and it is all we have*. How eagerly, then, should we search it! Think what an inestimable treasure it would have been to Socrates and Plato, to Cato and Cicero, as it has been to so many of like spirit with them—to Newton, to Johnston, to Brewster, to Maury, and to many ten thousands of like mind. How those old philosophers would have bathed their very souls with ecstasy in its glorious light! And shall we do less? There, and there alone will we find the answers to these great questions that men are continually asking as to their origin, their present state and their future destiny.

Its first utterance is—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. i, 1). In due time he filled the earth with beauty. Grasses, and trees, and flowers, and fruits, in unending profusion, covered the earth and satisfied with endless adaptations all living things. Animals, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, sprang from the creative word with amazing prodigality. Earth, with all its teeming millions, was a scene of joy. The blessed sunlight, and the soft rays of the moon, gilded the day and silvered the night with inexpressible glory, and the stars looked down with sympathy, on a peace and beauty rivalling their own. The fragrance and melody of spring, the maturer graces of summer, pregnant with promised fruit, autumn's abundant harvests, and winter's garnered comforts, each filled its special part in the circle of perpetual delights. Over this scene God's spirit brooded, and all created things rejoiced in his smile.

But there yet remained one crowning act. A higher exercise of the creative will was needed to complete the work. This Paradise was without a head. Among all the living

things peopling the earth, there was not one capable of government—not one knowing his Creator, and capable of returning conscious love and gratitude for the gift of life, with all its attendant happiness. And so, in the councils of the Triune God, it was said: “Let us make man—in our own image, after our likeness” (Gen. i, 26). “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Gen. ii, 7).

Now, when the body of man was thus moulded by the plastic hand of his Creator into that form of wonderful beauty, it would soon have fallen into decay and returned to dust again, if nothing more had been done. The elements of which it was composed would soon have separated under that balmy sky, beneath which it was reposing in unconscious symmetry and grace. It would only have presented for a little while before its decay that sweet pathetic appearance which the poet describes as seen by him

“ * Who hath lent him o’er the dead,
 ’Ere the first day of death hath fled,
 * * * * *
 And marked the mild angelic air,
 The rapture of repose that’s there,
 Before decay’s effacing fingers
 Have swept the lines where beauty lingers.”

But man was not doomed thus to decay. God “breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul” (Gen. ii, 7). “So God created man in his own image; in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. i, 27). When God thus breathed into that lifeless body the “breath of life” (which was the breath of God) man became a “living soul,” composed of body and spirit linked in immortal union. And in the immortal union of the two, there was the *image and like-*

ness of God—not in the spirit alone, but in the body and spirit united in immortality of life—a likeness disclosed to us when God was manifested in the face of our Saviour Christ, who was the express image of His person (Heb. i, 3).

And now the work of creation was done, and God pronounced all that he had made “very good.” In answer to the Divine approval “the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God *shouted for joy*” (Job xxxiii, 7). One universal jubilee from the earth and from all living things rose like sweet music on the air, and announced the completion of another world perfect in its maker’s eyes. Man, the child of heaven, sat in heavenly bowers and fed day by day on heavenly fruits. Fullness without satiety, joy without weariness, hope without fear, expectation without disappointment, sweet repose, health, peace and perfect innocence, all blended their manifold influences in his body, mind and soul; and gave him a foretaste of the still better things to be revealed hereafter. Angelic ministries watched over him, and beneath the smile of the common Father in Heaven, shed odors of immortal origin around his couch and about his path. Messages, borne more swiftly than electric speed, by angel’s wings from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, passed and repassed, charged with sympathy and protection on the one hand, and fidelity and gratitude on the other. Oh! sweet and blessed scene! Oh! lost Paradise of our race, how our hearts ache and yearn as we recall thy joys! Even we, who have never tasted the fruits of Eden, yet feel in our heart of heart that the princely heritage was once our own, and that still its possessions are congenial to us. We may sometimes content ourselves with the coarse raiment and unsavory fare of the wilderness; but it is only to mourn in our hours of thought,

with intense longing, with insatiable desire for the better things to which we were born.

Man, then, at his creation was immortal, but his immortality, like that of other creatures of God, was conditional. God's immortality alone is absolute. The condition of man's immortality in body and soul was the continual influx of the quickening spirit—which could be prevented by himself alone. Its interruption would be death. Sin alone, violation of the will of God alone could produce that death; and that inevitably would do so, because it would produce alienation from God, who not only is the bestower of life, but who only "hath life *in himself*" (John v, 26), who only is "*the Life*" (Ibid, xiv, 16). In short, the condition was that he who should be "*alienated from the life of God*" (Eph. iv, 18) by resisting or neglecting or failing to do His will would forfeit his immortality. If man sinned, he would die, body and soul (though his body might not be immediately dissolved), the moment that he sinned. He would not merely incur the penalty of a future death, but at the instant that he sinned, the sin would be his executioner—he would die then and there. "*In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die*" (Gen. ii, 17). He would be dead while he lived (1 Tim. v, 6), and all his descendants would be but the dead heirs of a dead father.

Thus endowed, and thus warned, man, the prince imperial of this beautiful world, moved through Eden, its acknowledged head. The clear sweet air, the rolling landscape, the streams, the rocks, the trees, the flowers and fruits, the animals, the birds, the clouds, the sky, the firmament at night—all filled him with delight, and bore up his thoughts in joy and thanksgiving to God, the gracious giver of them all. Oh! that that universal jubilee were

still ringing in our ears! Oh! that the course of time had not been changed, and that we were still part of many blessed generations, perpetuating that eternal anthem! Alas! for us, this was not to be! We are the heirs of a forfeited immortality.

Though invested by his Creator with imperial dominion, possessed of complete happiness, and with capacities for increasing and eternal felicity, man was not content. Instead of the gradual increase of knowledge and power ordained for him, he coveted its immediate possession. His rebellious heart was stimulated by the fraudulent suggestions of a being more rebellious and more subtle than himself, and instead of submitting to the will of his Maker, he chose to exert his own in things forbidden. Disobedience to the God in whom was his life severed him from that life. Alienation from life brought in death, and all nature shuddered with conscious ruin. "All the foundations of the earth" slipped "*out of course*" (Ps. lxxxii, 5). Then, instead of an universal jubilee, there arose one universal discord. Instead of flowers and fruits, the earth produced thorns and thistles and noxious plants. Instead of peace, the blood of the innocent reddened the rivers and the seas, and cried out to God from the ground. And so man, the wisest and best beloved of all the creatures of the Father, insanely exchanged innocence for guilt, immortal life for death, and the paradise of his birth for a howling wilderness.

But if he continued, and his descendants do now continue, though dead, to move about in this same world with no apparent change, what *was* this death? It is important that we should carefully note the precise answer of Scripture to this question, because, from our habit of applying the word death almost exclusively to that dissolution of

the body which separates it from the spirit, we may miss the great truths designed to be conveyed to us. Geology seems to teach us that death, in the mere sense of dissolution of the flesh, had taken place in beasts many ages before man's creation, and therefore altogether independently of his sins. Beasts were not made immortal, and therefore died *naturally*, and in a manner not necessarily involving any evil. Man died *unnaturally*, and doubtless his death—prince and governor as he was—involved evil to all his subjects. The question as to the death of beasts—viz, the mere dissolution of the flesh—is a very different question from that as to *the death of man*. To the question as to the death of man, we have emphatic answers in Scripture.

The many texts which inform us that alienation from God—walking in trespasses and sins, spiritual ignorance through neglect, unbelief, living in pleasure, &c., &c., are death—are all summed up in that clear and well-defined utterance of the Spirit: "To be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace" (Rom. viii, 6). We learn from this and the texts alluded to, that life and death, in the Scripture sense of the words, are *conditions of the mind or soul*, producing happiness or misery; and the reason why this state *is* death, is given—"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Ibid 7), who is the fountain of life and happiness. Alienated from Him, we die, body and soul, and this alienation and consequent death must necessarily be complete the instant that we sin. We are then "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. i, 1). We are not under sentence of death to be executed at some future period, but dead *then*, on the instant—so that our "eternal death" (whatever that may be, for it is not a Scripture phrase) *has already commenced*, even while we

are—what in common language we call—alive. The consequences of this death are that we have lost our “likeness” to God, lost our unity of soul and body in immortality of life—a likeness and unity that can never be restored till the “new heavens and the new earth” shall appear as the fit receptacles for new bodies restored through Christ to immortal union with redeemed souls. And so, when “our appointed time” comes, “*then* shall the dust return to the dust *as it was*, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it” (Eccle. xii, 7).

Do we think that we have no part in this great fall except to suffer from it, and blame our first parents that they have bestowed on us by their sin a corrupt nature, fancying that if we had been in their place we would not have fallen? If such a thought has entered our minds, let us search our hearts. The key-note of the universal harmony of the first paradise was conformity to the unerring, loving will of our Father in heaven. Do we possess that key-note? Or is it either wanting, or, at the best, “like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh?” Do we submit to what we suppose to be that will, or do we resist it? Do we keep our minds and hearts pure, our hands clean, and use this world as not abusing it? If, as we think, God permits bereavement, the loss of wife or child; if adversity befall us; if we are embarrassed in our business; if our fortunes are broken at a blow; if we are in want, even in want of necessaries,—do we humbly submit to what we suppose the will of God in these dispensations, and cast all our care on Him? Do we not rather submit to it because we cannot help it? Or else daily resist it, and murmur and cry against it, and weary heaven and earth with our complaints? Ah! we want God’s will to be done, if it conforms to our own. In truth, we do not want His will

to be done at all—we want our own wills to be done. It is vain for us to complain of our first parents, and to say that if we had been placed in their circumstances we would never have forfeited our glorious heritage. Such thoughts are deep delusions and deceptions of our hearts. We are, of our own wills, partakers of their sin every day and hour, in cases where, if we *would*, we *could* do otherwise. So then, “All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. iii, 23). “There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Ibid 10–11). We have “all gone out of the way,” all “together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Ibid 12).

It will appear in the sequel that the fault of this departure was wholly our own, and that God, *after our creation*, did all that omnipotent wisdom and love could do to prevent it. For the present it is assumed. We hope also to be able to show that the *creation* of a being sure to fall, can be justified on sound principles, which can be easily understood; and that those principles agree with Scripture.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE RENEWED—DEATH CONFIRMED.

ALL then have fallen, not only in Adam's fall, but each by his own fault; and each of us is now making his brief pilgrimage and probation through that wilderness which received our first parents when the gates of Eden closed behind them for sins similar to our own. The solemn question, the universal question, comes back to us with new force. When we have passed the wilderness, what then? What is reserved for us in that great future, stretching so relentlessly before us? "If a man die, shall he live again?" (Job xiv, 14). It cannot be long before these questions will come home to every son of man with awful solemnity. By all of us they must be met and answered soon; by some of us very soon. These questions, even more than that in regard to the origin of life, have baffled all human wisdom. No seer has ever been found capable of grappling with such problems. Their solution must come down from God out of heaven. Like weary travelers, surrounded by night and the road lost, we must sink down into indifference or despair, unless we will open our ears and hear the gracious voice coming down from above, and revealing to us One who is "the way, the truth and the life" (John xiv, 6)—the only true way by which we can ever see life renewed in us. All we who are weary, all we who are sorrowing, all we who are in doubt or difficulty, all we who fear or would know the future, may rejoice with joy, unspeakable and full of glory, that the same

heavenly voice declares to us that "as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv, 22).

Yes, heaven and earth may well rejoice at the life-giving word; but before taking in its full measure of comfort it becomes us to enquire on what terms we are to be made alive—whether the promise is absolute or conditional.

As our sins, the result of our non-conformity to the will of God, have produced alienation from Him, and consequent death and misery, so a restoration to life and happiness can come alone from a new conformity to that will. Accordingly, the Apostle prays us "in Christ's stead" to be "reconciled to God" (2 Cor. v, 20). But how is that reconciliation to be effected? Our consciences convict us of having offended God in the past; and we well know, that weak and corrupt as we are, we shall offend him again in the future. The sinful past is irrevocable, the sinful future is certain. What then is to be done? For surely, unless some provision is made beyond our own power or strength to effect that reconciliation, it can never be effected. Happily for us just such a provision has been made.

We read that "while we were yet *without strength*, in due time, Christ *died for the ungodly*" (Rom. v, 6); that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while *we were yet sinners*, Christ died for us" (Ibid 8); that "this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ *came into the world to save sinners*" (1 Tim. i, 15). Yes, verily, it is worthy of *all* acceptation, and *by all*, for we are also told that "neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name given under heaven, among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv, 12).

Is it asked *how* the death of Christ, though Son of Man and Son of God, can enure to our benefit; how the blood

of the innocent can wash the guilty clean? We cannot answer. We learn from St. Paul (Eph. i, 9-11) and from other texts that it is a great mystery; and from St. Peter that it is one which "the angels desire to look into" (1 Peter i, 12). We cannot probe it with "hows" and "whys." It is enough for us to reap its benefits; it is enough for us to know that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from *all* sin" (1 John i, 7); that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. v, 19), and that God "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (Ibid 21).

Does the death of Christ save us then, as matter of course? No; we must co-operate in the matter; we must "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii, 12); we must be "workers together with him" (2 Cor. vi, 1). His death is potential to save us, but in order to avail ourselves of it, we must desire to be saved by it, and fulfill the terms on which it enures to our benefit. We must strive to follow the example of obedience to God, which he set while on earth; we must strive to walk in the path once trod through fiery trials and temptations by

" * * * * * those blessed feet,
 Which (eighteen) hundred years ago were nail'd
 For our advantage on the bitter cross."

A boat is capable of saving a ship-wrecked mariner, but in order that it may do so, he must exert himself to get into it. So the ark of our salvation must be reached by our own efforts. God and man must concur in the great work—God to provide the means of salvation, and we to endeavor, by his help, to subdue our stubborn wills, our unholy desires and affections, our worldly lusts; and so

seek to avail ourselves of those means. As soon as we are prepared to do this, and so to accept the salvation that is by Christ, the lost key-note of the universal harmony is restored to our souls, and we again become "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii, 17).

To attain this blessedness we need only *try earnestly* to do God's will. We will never succeed fully in this world. No Christian has *ever* lived; none is *now* living; none *will* ever live, who has not sinned; who does not sin now daily and hourly; who will not sin hereafter, oftentimes grossly. St. John and St. Paul and all the inspired writers set this before us vividly and constantly. They do not apply it to past but to present sins. One of them says: "We are all as *an unclean thing*, and all our righteousnesses are as *filthy rags*" (Isaiah lxiv, 6). Another says: "If we say that we have no sin" (even the best—even St. John) "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i, 8). Another says he finds a law in his members (to which he yields) which wars against the law of his mind—the thing "I would, that do I not, but what I hate, that do I; the good that I would, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Rom. vii, 15–25). Now these men were the chiefs of all the Christians, the very elect of God, and they are speaking of themselves as the representatives of all Christians. It is not therefore a question of our sins, past, present, or to come—it is a question of our intent, of our will and purpose. Even human law holds a man a criminal or a good citizen, not with reference to the *fact* of crime, but to his intent. If, then, we can truthfully say with Paul, "So, then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God," then we may rejoice to believe that we are Christians, and have passed from death unto life,

even though we are obliged to mourn with him, that we serve "with the flesh the law of sin" (Ibid), for then, immediately, life, immortal life, *is restored* to our souls.

But, when our "appointed time" comes, and the spirit returns to God who gave it, we must leave our ruined bodies behind. Christ redeems the soul, but not the fallen body. "If (even if) Christ be in you, the *body is dead* because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. viii, 10). The bodies of *all* die, therefore, *because* of sin, and return to their dust, but the spirits of all return to God who gave them—those who are in Christ being in life, and those who are not in him being dead in "trespasses and sins," *just in the same sense, and from the same cause*, that they were dead before their bodies returned to the dust.

But, when the spirits of all have thus returned to the God who gave them, what is their state? We have already seen that they are in a state of life or death, accordingly as they have accepted the redemption of Christ or not; but are they floating about like invisible mists in the other world, or are they in some definite place, and are they conscious or not? In the spiritual world there are several places or departments. The alternate phrase of the apostles' creed speaks of the "place of departed spirits." This place is spoken of in the Scriptures, in the original, as *Hades*, and means the invisible place of the dead, or a place beneath. It is unfortunate that in our version of the Scriptures it is often translated *Hell*, which conveys a false idea of it to our minds. It is a place beneath, because, whatever it may be in reference to the earth, it is lower than the highest heavens, of which it is said "David is not yet ascended into the heavens" (Acts ii, 34), and to which St. Paul ascended in that wonderful vision, and heard "unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter"; and

when the glory and “abundance of the revelations” made to him were so bewildering, that to prevent his being “exalted above measure,” God had to send him a “thorn in his flesh.” He tells us that whether “in the body” or “out of the body,” he could not tell, he was “caught up to the third heaven,” where he saw these wondrous things (see 2 Cor. xii, 1–10). This means probably the highest heavens, where God pre-eminently displays His glory; but wherever it was, it was a different place from that visited by the Divine Redeemer when he “went and preached to the spirits in prison” (1 Pet. iii, 19). This was probably the place of those *not in Christ*, and was one department of this Hades, or “place of departed spirits,” while the other is the place of those *in Christ*; for he told the dying thief, “verily I say unto thee this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise” (Luke xxiii, 43). In this place of departed spirits, the dead of all the past await the “change,” to come on the morning of the resurrection.

But while thus waiting, are they conscious of their state? Why should they not be? We have seen that death, in the Scripture sense, is a condition of the soul, by which, through sin, it is put out of harmony with God, and that it had two consequences—one of them the utter destruction of the body, at its “appointed time”—and the other, the immediate misery of the soul and its “return to God” at the same “appointed time.” But the soul is the seat of consciousness, and not the body; so that it would seem that the destruction of the latter would not involve a loss of consciousness. The wicked were “dead in trespasses and sins” before their bodies returned to the dust—that is, while they were, what we call, alive, but yet they were conscious then. Why should they not be so now, when (their spirits being with God) they are alive in a far higher

sense? They are so, and with all the exquisite sensibility of this intenser life, they have gone down into the "place of departed spirits," unrelieved, as hitherto, by the amusements, and pleasures, and distractions of this life, with all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life—its riches, its honors, its ambitions, its hopes—all passed away forever, they stand face to face with a gracious God—a compassionate Father—a loving Saviour—a yearning Spirit, whose laws they have violated, whose proffered salvation they have rejected or neglected, whose gentle and persuasive influences they have received in vain; and so there settles down upon their ruined souls the misery of creatures alienated from their God—conscious guilt, remorse for the past, and sad forebodings for the future—tortures which have no present mitigation, even from that

" Bless'd tear of soul-felt penitence,
 In whose benign redeeming flow,
 Is felt the first, the only sense
 Of guiltless joy that guilt can know."

We turn now from this sad scene to soothe our spirits by the contemplation of the "dead in Christ." Every reason that goes to show that the wicked continue in a conscious state of suffering after the dissolution of the body, gives increased conviction that the blessed dead continue then in a conscious state of bliss, awaiting the "day of the Lord." In addition we have the warrant of Scripture for this conviction; for we are there told that Moses and Elias appeared at the transfiguration, "talking with Jesus" (Mark ix, 4; Matt. xvii, 3), and spake to him "of His decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke ix, 31). We are also exhorted by our blessed Lord to use our money for the benefit of others, so that

when we depart hence, the friends we have so made, and who have preceded us, may welcome us to Paradise, "and I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke xvi, 9). St. John saw in vision beneath the altar (long before the resurrection) the "souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice and said, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled" (Rev. vii, 10-11). Let this be figuratively expressed, still it conveys the idea of *conscious rest* (oh blessed word!) for those who "sleep in Jesus." That the blessed dead are "asleep" or "at rest," does not, therefore, impair the force of these comforting convictions. It is doubtless an incomplete state until at the resurrection they are invested with their "glorified bodies"; but it is a state of sweet, conscious rest. It appears, then, that if we depart "in Christ," we shall immediately "see Him as He is," in the "Paradise of God," and rest in peaceful, conscious expectation of our perfection at the resurrection, by investiture with bodies "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. iii, 21). No gloom of the grave awaits God's ransomed ones. Death has come, and found nothing in them for his blazing sword. He will, indeed, win a temporary triumph over their frail bodies, but on the beautiful garments in which their souls are arrayed by Him who "bore their sins in His *own* body on the tree," the *smell* even of His fiery breath shall not be found.

And now, though Paradise has been lost, it is nothing to a "Paradise regained." The bitter sorrow, the long delay, will enhance an hundred fold the glorious restoration of eternal joy. And that joy is ours—is *ours*, oh weary, struggling, sorrowing fellow-mortals, if we will only strive for it; if we will only regain, by accepting Christ as our Saviour, that virgin grace which made its charm, honest, earnest submission to the will of God. When we shall have bowed our stubborn wills, to rest our all on "Jesus Christ, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness" (1 Cor. i, 23), we shall have fulfilled all the law, because his merit of obedience will enure to our benefit.

And then heaven is ours. Come what will to us in this world, we shall re-enter when we depart hence on immortal life. We shall join the great "assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven" (Heb. xii, 23). We shall be received with joy and gladness by the loved ones who have gone before, now more loving and beautiful than ever, on the everlasting hills of Zion, and with them swell the sweet anthems of the restored Paradise of God. And then some day the soft, sweet resurrection signal (soft and sweet in that pure air) shall echo through those happy hills, and "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and *so shall we ever be with the Lord*" (2 Thess. iv, 16-17). In that glorious fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, St. Paul, glowing with unwonted eloquence, describes the resurrection with rapt enthusiasm. He tells us that *there is a natural body and there is a spiritual body*. We have

already seen that the natural body is destroyed utterly "because of sin"; but St. Paul tells us that out of it—as a flower out of an ugly seed, and bearing the same relationship to it—shall spring a spiritual body. This seed sown in corruption shall be raised in *incorruption*; sown in dishonor, it shall be raised in *glory*; sown in weakness, it shall be raised in *power*; sown a natural body, it shall be raised a *spiritual* body. In this light we can see the redeemed standing before the bar of God, radiant in beauty, strength and immortality, and clothed with the robes of Christ's perfect righteousness. God's searching eye sees no spot upon them; and being justified by faith, their immortality in body and soul restored, they enter into the many mansions of their Father's House in the Highest Heavens, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads—angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven, uniting in their glad welcome home, to their unending rest.

But what of the lost? We have seen them conducted by their sins to their own place in Hades. We have seen them suffering there, from remorse of conscience, from utter desolation and loneliness, as aliens from their Father in heaven—and suffering these things with a keenness and bitterness which the distractions of earth prevented while they were here, but which the realities of the spiritual world develop now with terrible energy.

But how is God affected by their sufferings? Does He sternly or coldly see them writhing there? Does His holy eye blaze through and through their naked souls, increasing their pangs and extinguishing all hope of their abatement by any means in heaven or earth that Omnipotence can employ? Is the tender, pitying glance of Him who was on earth the God of love, turned for them into fiery flames of consuming vengeance—vengeance inexorable

and complete? Is He no longer the God of love for a portion of His miserable creatures, but the God of war and wrath for them? Did they indeed read in lurid flames over the brazen gates of the dread abyss before they shut with horrid clang behind their shuddering souls: "Leave hope behind, who enter here?" Have the faculties of their souls been utterly destroyed by sin, so that they themselves are new creatures of her hellish hand; or has hope—that last, most indestructible of them all—alone closed her weary eye, and left but her tomb in hearts and minds from which she was once inseparable?

Or, on the contrary, does the Spirit of God still brood over this dismal scene? Does redeeming love still yearn for the lost soul? Does the wail of the Divine Compassion, infinite and indestructible, still mourn, even if afar off, over that sorrowful fate? Is there still any hope that once again, "in the fullness of times," after whatever uncounted period, through the "tribulation and anguish" inflicted by sin, there may be produced in the damned a desire to cease from sinning? Is there still any hope that the punishment of the future state is not vindictive but reformatory? Is there still any hope that infinite wisdom, by infinite redeeming love, will yet bring order out of confusion, and restore to harmony and peace and joy the entire universe it has made?

It is the object of the following chapters to answer these solemn questions, and, by God's help, to show that the true consummation of the Divine plan in the sacrifice of Christ, is the ultimate restoration of peace "in heaven and in earth, and under the earth." This golden key, if it can be found, will unlock the gloomy, rust-eaten door, behind which is hidden the precious secret of the "origin of evil." Once inside, we may subject it to analysis, and

we may find that in the “alchemy of heaven” inevitable evil has been converted into an eternal blessing, unattainable in any other way, to every intelligent creature in God’s entire universe?

A brief review of this and the preceding chapter may be useful.

1st. We have seen that life and death cannot be explained by man, but are revealed by God alone.

2d. That life is the “breath of God,” by which man was made immortal, body and soul, an immortality conferring happiness, but conditioned on conformity to the will of God.

3d. That man violated the condition, and by sin incurred the forfeiture—dying, body and soul—*the instant that he sinned*; and that this death is a condition of the mind or soul, accompanied by its immediate misery and the future ruin of the body.

4th. That though thus “dead while he lives,” his body will return to the dust only at an “appointed time” thereafter; and that his soul does not consciously suffer complete misery till then, by reason of the distractions of the world, and his present incapacity to appreciate the unseen realities of the spiritual world; by reason of the superior influence over the mind of the things that are seen, though temporal, as compared with the things that are unseen, though eternal.

5th. That dissolution of the body and death of the soul are due to alienation from the life of God, in whom alone we are alive.

6th. That provision is made by the death of Christ, for restoration to the life of God, which carries with it, for all who accept it before the dissolution of the body, the renewal of the soul’s happiness, and its conscious rest in Christ in the place of departed spirits, after that dissolution has taken place.

7th. That the old body being hopelessly dead "because of sin," and soul and body *united in immortality*, being necessary for one in the "image of God," a new body will rise at the resurrection from the old, as a flower from the germ, to be united to the soul in indissoluble union, both free from danger of another fall by likeness to Christ and heirship with him in glory.

8th. That those who do not accept the provision made for them in Christ before the dissolution of the body, have "no part in him" in this world, and go into the "place of departed spirits," still dead in "trespasses and sins"—just as they were here and with the same conscious suffering, but intensified by a realization of their position not possible while they were on earth.

What then?

CHAPTER IV.

THE VARIOUS THEORIES AS TO THE CONDITION OF THE LOST.

THE calculations of the learned German statisticians— Drs. Behm and Wagner—place the present population of the earth at between fourteen and fifteen hundred millions of souls. It would be a vain attempt to ascertain how many have lived on the earth since the creation of man. Any estimate that could be made would place their number at many thousands of millions—figures that convey no appreciable meaning to our minds, except that of an inconceivable multitude. Now the view accepted by a large section of the multiform Christian creeds is, that the great majority of these multitudes—at least of the adults—are hopelessly lost. Surely, so fearful a statement must fill every unbiased mind with horror and dismay. Even the loss of one single soul, doomed to an endless and hopeless torture, inconceivable in degree as in duration—a doom of which one has said, “it is infinitely beyond the highest archangel’s faculty to apprehend the thousandth part of the horror”—is appalling beyond description. When such a thought has once entered the mind in vital form, it cannot be at rest till it has inquired how such a calamity could have befallen *any* of our race, much more the largest number; and in our vague ideas of the sovereignty of God, our first thought is that He must in some way be responsible for it; that He could, if He would, have prevented it. Against such a thought the mind, not less than the heart, will revolt sooner or later with un-

terable loathing, unless it is bound by the trammels of a traditional creed, paralyzed by some accepted dogma, or conscious of its impotence, is ready to resign all thought and accept whatever monstrous doctrine its masters and teachers may impose upon it. To this last sad condition the majority, even of intelligent men, seem willing to resign themselves; and a blind adherence to dogma, whether caused by this self-surrender, or by party spirit, has produced and is still producing more desolation in the earth than all the excesses of radicalism are able or ever will be able to produce. But in every age of the world and of the church, there have been multitudes who could not be thus satisfied, and who either consciously or unconsciously have wrought out theories and systems for themselves, which have given them more or less satisfaction—each having a system, which, in his wisdom or his ignorance, appeared to him to conform more nearly to the truth of Scripture than those of others. Whatever follies may have been thus committed, it is better so than that they should have settled down into ignorance, indifference or submission to the *ipsi dixit* of a despotic spiritual authority. The one at least gives evidence of life—the other is the silence of spiritual sleep or death. We need only notice the four theories that are accepted by considerable bodies of men; and even from these we exclude that sentimental opinion which affirms that man deserves no suffering in the future world for what he did here, and that even if he did, God is too merciful to permit him so to suffer. We confine our attention to those who accept the words “eternal” or “everlasting” punishment as descriptive of the condition of the lost; but who interpret those words in different senses. Of these there are four classes:

1st. Those who interpret those words as meaning *endless* and *hopeless* punishment.

2d. Those who interpret them as meaning a punishment that either immediately annihilates, or else endures till it extinguishes the soul.

3d. Those who interpret them as meaning a punishment that is *æonian*, or till the end of the *æon*, age, or dispensation.

4th. Those who interpret them as meaning a punishment or suffering, indefinite as to its duration; but who believe also that it is one enduring as long as the sinful temper endures, and terminable in the future life as in this by repentance and restoration to God through Christ.

First. Those who interpret the words as meaning *endless and hopeless punishment* (either as matter of dogma, or as matter of deliberate and intelligent opinion) constitute a large part of the Christian Church. But though at one as to the punishment, they are divided into antagonistic parties as to the subjects of it. They agree that none can escape the punishment save those only who accept Christ's salvation in this life; but there they diverge. One of them maintains that those only are saved who from eternity were elected to salvation by God, and that the lost were equally elected from eternity to damnation by Him, in each case without any merit or demerit on the part of those thus disposed of, but by the will of God. Those by whom this strange extreme of doctrine is generally held, stand, and have always stood, as high for pure and undefiled religion as any body of Christians whatever—one of the many proofs we possess that mistake of doctrine may well harmonize with righteousness of life. The other maintains that no man is lost except by his own will; for that the offer of salvation is made to all, and all are free to accept or reject it as they themselves may elect. An incessant

war has been waged between these two schools of opinion. Whole libraries have been poured out on either side, by men of wonderful ability and learning, with no progress towards the settlement of their differences. Now it is plain, that if the hopeless and unending punishment of man in the world to come, even for his own fault, raises in the mind anxious inquiry as to how this can consist with the holiness of God, the suggestion that it was deliberately purposed and planned by God in the beginning, and that he made these poor lost souls expressly for this dismal fate, adds unspeakable difficulty to the inquiry, or rather renders the question entirely insoluble. For centuries the church has been deafened by the din and clamor of a strife, hopeless of result, because both sides were reasoning all the time from false premises. At last there is a prospect that as soon as the advocates of the darker view shall calmly examine the new light thrown upon the subject, there will be a peace or at least a truce. It was reserved for a great living* thinker to bestow this light. As when a new land is sought, one searcher will find an adjacent island, another a promontory, another and another some projecting headland, till at last one shall explore the whole coast, explode their conjectures, correct their errors, and give a consistent map of the land—so this great discoverer has supplied us with a chart of new realms in moral science. This son of Anak has removed mountains of hoary errors and sophisms, and made a demonstration that on this point seems to be complete. In his immortal work (*Theodicy*) Dr. Bledsoe has demonstrated, if anything is capable of demonstration, that the idea of God dooming men, infants or adults to eternal perdition, without any reference to

*NOTE.—All of this book but the last two or three chapters was written before his lamented death.

their deserts, and of his own mere will, is as false as it is unspeakably horrible, and is a caricature of the Deity because utterly inconsistent with every principle of justice or mercy. Those who wish to see the argument in all its grand proportions, and to see the crashed and scattered bones of its great antagonist around it, will enjoy a great pleasure by referring to the book itself.

Though relieved of this nightmare, as it seems to us, the question still remains—how are we to reconcile the *endless* and *hopeless* punishment of *any* of God's creatures with His holiness?

For ages men have been crazed by thinking too constantly and *unwisely* on the great question of the origin of evil. They have blinded themselves by gazing too intently and *with bad eyes* into the darkness. Great and good men, however, have from time to time, explored almost every principle on which the solution of the question depends. Strong intellectual lenses have concentrated the light upon them as with dark lanterns; but, unfortunately, such lanterns, though they could cast great avenues of light everywhere over the dark waters, could only cast them in one direction at a time, because, elsewhere, surrounded by dogmatic shades and shadows. Great intervening darkness lay between these avenues. Some have built or fancied mysterious bridges across these chasms, and from them have mapped out the whole space; and have become angry with those who could not understand these maps that seemed so plain to them—while others have contented themselves with the light they saw, and faithfully believed that they would be as well content with the remaining space, if they could only see it. A great Pharos at last appears erected on a rock, absorbing these avenues in one broad sheet of light radiating throughout its sphere, and

illuminating the dark and stormy waters around it. Unfortunately it was not elevated sufficiently high to reach the whole horizon of the argument.

With the great question of the origin of evil on the supposition that *any* are doomed to hopeless and endless punishment, Dr. Bledsoe grapples mightily, and endeavors to prove that moral evil is consistent with the holiness of God, even on that supposition. Having cleared away the difficulties interposed by the sophistry and dogmatic rigidity of his adversaries, he propounds his own theory. It is not possible to state that theory in this little essay in all its completeness, even if we were capable of doing so. The club of Hercules cannot be made to fit conveniently into a receptacle intended for a quarter staff. We must, therefore, endeavor to present briefly its bare outlines, as we understand it, in our own words, though we are quite conscious that we may not thus do full justice to it, or interpret even these outlines fairly. We will try to do so.

When God created man he felt towards him all those sentiments of affection, which we can only faintly typify by a father's love for his child. He desired earnestly that man should exhibit to him the love and obedience of a child, of which he was inconceivably worthy. Foreseeing that in his heedlessness and waywardness, this child would fall away from his Divine Father, he made in advance an ample provision to redeem his fall and restore him to his favor. He created man, this son of His, in His own likeness, provided bountifully for him, employed all the agencies for his happiness and well-doing that boundless love could suggest and limitless power command, and laid on him only the obligation of obedience and gratitude. In spite of all this man fell from his allegiance, and added obstinate unbelief to his ingratitude by a refusal to accept

the provision made for his redemption. He thus incurred just punishment as the penalty of his sin. But, if indeed ineffable love yearned over the sinner, why did not omnipotent power prevent his fall? Because even omnipotent power *could not* prevent it. What is omnipotence? Not the power to do everything—but only that which is true and right. God, for example, we may reverently and joyfully say, cannot work a contradiction; for the very nature of Him, who cannot lie, who is perfect and complete, judging right, would forbid it. God cannot make two and two equal to five, or the part equal to the whole, for these things would be contradictions. We must bear this in mind when we consider man's case. God had made all beautiful and wonderful creatures on the earth without number, before man's creation; but among them all there was not one being endowed with a sense of moral responsibility, not one capable of returning conscious love and gratitude to its Maker. The law impressed upon the nature of all existing things was, that after their creation they should continue what they were, by no voluntary or co-operative agency of their own, but by the external power of God. The birds sang by an irresistible impulse, simply because they could not help it; and all other creatures played their parts by a similar necessity of their natures.

But man, made in the image of God, after His likeness, must necessarily possess in some degree the Divine capacities (the same in kind, though infinitely lower in degree), and among them the capacity of willing to do or to forbear to do, free from external control. If he did not possess this power, he would be in no moral respect different from the bird that sings because it must. If God, after man's creation, *could* have coerced his will, the coercion would have been an act of power contrary to the very nature of

man, and its effect would have been either to annihilate him or to change him into a brute. But so long as man continues *to be man*, his love and willing obedience cannot be coerced, for this would be a contradiction—a thing impossible with God. Of course the man may be forced by stress of pain to do so and so, but then it is no longer an act of the will, or a willing act. And so man was to do or to forbear to do God's will, to love or to hate Him at his own mere will. God could persuade, entreat, allure him in all gracious ways, but could not coerce his love or compel a willing obedience, *for these are contradictions in terms*. The law of man's nature, then, the condition on which alone he could exist at all *as man*, was, from the necessity of the case, the very reverse of that imposed upon all other creatures—viz: that he should continue what he was at his creation, the son of God, and as such heir of all things in earth and heaven, not simply by the external power of God, but by his own voluntary will and efforts, co-operating with the gracious aid of his Father in heaven. Even if there were no revelation on the subject, we ourselves are conscious that we are free to love or hate, to do or refuse to do without any control beyond our own wills. And he who was both God and man declares, not that we cannot have life, but that "ye *will* not come to me that ye may have life" (John v, 40). It thus appears that God is in no sense the author of sin and its consequent suffering, or responsible for its existence in any way on account of his failure to prevent man's fall. He does not impose punishment on the sinner, but the sinner brings punishment, or, to speak more correctly, suffering on himself by his sins, from the nature of the case.

Thus far this argument seems to be entirely satisfactory. We are unable to see how any rational answer can be given

to it. But at this point Dr. Bledsoe diverges from the advocates of a benigner creed. He alleges that if the sinner departs this life impenitent, the punishment is endless, not because such a penalty is merited by every sin, but because the culprit will continue to sin forever. He quotes the argument of another against the proposition that each sin merits an eternal penalty, and comments thus: "This answer alone, though perhaps not the best that might be made, we deem amply sufficient. Indeed does not the position that a man, a poor, weak, fallible creature, deserves an infinite punishment, an eternity of torments, for each evil thought and word, carry its own refutation along with it? and if not, what are we to think of the attribute of justice which demands an eternity of torment to inflict the infinite pangs due to a single sin? Is it a quality to inspire the soul with a rational worship, or to fill it with a horror that casteth out love?" (*Theodicy*, p. 296). "We say, then, that eternal sufferings are deserved by the finally impenitent, not because every sinful act carries along with it an infinite guilt, nor because every sinner may be imagined to have committed an infinite number of sins, but because they will continue to sin forever. It will be conceded that if punishment be admissible at all, it is right and proper that so long as acts of rebellion are persisted in, the rewards of iniquity should attend them. It will be conceded that if the finally impenitent should continue to sin forever, then they forever deserve to reap the rewards of sin. But this is one part of the Scripture doctrine of future punishments that those who endure them will never cease to sin and rebel against the authority of God's law" (*Ibid* p. 303-4). "We do not suppose the soul of the guilty will continue to sin forever, because it will be consigned to the regions of the lost; but we suppose it will

be consigned to the regions of the lost, because by its own repeated acts of transgression, it has made sure of its eternal continuance in sinning" (Ibid p. 305). Now to all the principles laid down in the foregoing extracts, we are bound to give our assent, for they seem like almost, if not quite all those laid down in the "Theodicy" to be absolutely unanswerable. But there is one fact (as we will call it) assumed or stated, and claimed to be in accordance with the "Scripture doctrine of future punishments," which does not seem to be sufficiently established—to wit: that the finally impenitent (he who dies in his sins) has himself "*made sure of an eternal continuance in sinning.*" If this *be not true*, then it would seem that in accordance with the principles here laid down, another step must be taken in order to show "moral evil to be consistent with the holiness of God." If it *be true*, it must be admitted that Dr. Bledsoe has shown that as God could not prevent man, after he was once created, from sinning, he is not *immediately* responsible for the eternal punishment which results. But this appears only *to remove the difficulty one step further*; for the question still remains—why did He *create* any man, knowing that he would or could thus sin to his everlasting ruin, in spite of the use by God of all *possible* means to prevent him?

Dr. Bledsoe anticipates this objection. He says: "We have already said that the only real question is, not why God permitted evil, but why he created beings capable of sinning. Such creatures are beyond all question the most noble specimens of his workmanship. St. Augustine has beautifully said that the horse which has gone astray is a more noble creature than a stone which has no power to go astray. In like manner we may say that a moral agent that is capable of knowing and loving and serving God

though its very nature implies its ability to do otherwise, is a more glorious creature than any being destitute of such a capacity. If God had created no such being, his work might have represented him 'as a house doth the builder,' but not 'as a son doth his father.' If he had created no such beings, there would have been no eye in the universe except His own to admire and to love His works. Traces of His wisdom and goodness might have been seen here and there scattered over His works, provided any eye had been lighted up with intelligence to see them; but nowhere would His living and immortal image have been seen in the magnificent temple of the world. It will be conceded then that there is no difficulty in conceiving why God should have preferred a universe of His creatures, beaming with the glories of His own image, to one wholly destitute of the beauty of holiness and the light of intelligence. But having preferred the noblest order of beings, its inseparable incident, a liability to moral evil, could not have been excluded."

"Hence God is the author of all good, and of good alone; and evil proceeds not from Him nor from His permission, but from an abuse of those exalted and unshackled powers whose nature and whose freedom constitute the glory of the moral universe" (Ib. p. 198).

True it is that "creatures beaming with the glories" of God's image are infinitely preferable to those without intelligence enough to sin; and it will therefore be conceded that "there is no difficulty in conceiving why God should *have preferred* a universe" of such. But this gives us no aid in conceiving how His holiness is consistent with their creation, when He knew that they would, after their creation and their brief existence, be the victims of unending and remediless torment—nor of conceiving how such suf-

ferings are to be justified, because the "glory of the moral universe" could not be established without a state of things which rendered them inevitable.

But if it can be shown that God created these intelligent and responsible beings, foreknowing that though they would sin and suffer the penalty due to their sins—a penalty the effect of which would be reformatory—that though they might not repent under the discipline of this earthly dispensation; yet that they would do so ultimately, even if in the indefinite future, under the severer discipline of the place of departed spirits, or of the place into which they would be received after judgment; and that that suffering would, as a foil, only heighten the joy and glory of their restoration—a joy and glory only attainable *for them* through such suffering—*then indeed* may we see clearly that "moral evil" has been turned by God into a blessing; and *was the only means* by which he could "give and continue existence to free moral agents, and govern them *for their own good*, as well as for His glory" (Ibid p. 198).

We hope to be able to show hereafter that on the theory (a reasonable one indeed it seems) that death does not extinguish *the faculty of repentance* any more than it does the rest of the faculties of the soul, an ultimate restoration to God is demonstrable on known principles, and that a true interpretation of Scripture is consistent with that demonstration, and in fact confirms it. Without such a theory we do not believe the existence of "moral evil" *can* be shown to be "consistent with the holiness of God," even by such a master as Dr. Bledsoe.

At all events, even those who cherish this hopeful faith are greatly indebted to him for the aid he has given them in finding peace on the great question of the origin of evil, by removing mountain ranges, very Alps and Apen-

nines of ancient clouds and darknesses, which, though they had been left behind them, would still have threatened them with recurring doubts on these old questions. This great purifier of moral atmospheres has shown them a clear and smiling sky *in their rear*.

Second. Those who interpret the words as meaning a punishment that either immediately annihilates, or else endures till it extinguishes the soul.

Of this doctrine it may be remarked that, as with almost every conceit which men have adopted on every possible question about religion, there is a good deal in the Scriptures that *may* be interpreted in harmony with it; but there is much more there which is in antagonism with it. Moreover, it is one among those least consonant with reason and with instinct. It is in part for this reason, perhaps, that it has found fewer adherents, under *any* creed, than some harsher opinions on the future destiny of the impenitent. Little therefore need be said about it.

Philosophically, it is inconceivable that the all-wise Creator, who sees the end from the beginning, could annihilate *anything* he had made. This would imply a vacillation unworthy of infinite foresight. To change its form according to different emergencies of time and season and occasion, would only be a conformity to the law of variety, which is one of the chief glories of creation; but to annihilate any essence could serve no good end, it would seem, if it were wisely created in the beginning. The natural philosophers have long since adopted as a canon that no atom is ever lost, in whatever varieties of form and condition it may reappear. The idea of annihilation is abhorrent to reason and to sentiment, but we readily admit that neither of these are entirely safe guides on such high themes. To the "law and to the testimony," as interpreted

by a just reason and sentiment alone, can we with perfect safety submit such questions.

The state of the wicked is almost everywhere described in Scripture as a continued existence; thus, they are to be subjected to "wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish" (John ii, 8-9); they are to awake to "shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii, 2); and in almost all the texts descriptive of their condition, a state of *conscious suffering* is described, and not of annihilation. Why need they "awake" to be annihilated? This might have been done while they slept, if intended. If they are not to be annihilated immediately after they awake to judgment, but are to linger out ages of shame and anguish, until the soul, no longer able to bear the intolerable load, languishes into a dismal extinction, the task of reconciling such a fate with the pity and love of God would be an absolute impossibility. There is no mere man not utterly besotted, who could witness the writhings of a mangled brute mortally wounded, whose pity would not extend the merciful blow that would end its pangs; and can we suppose that God, who intended ultimately to annihilate the impenitent dead, and who could annihilate, if He chose, as easily as He could create, would be less pitiful than man?

In many texts there are strong side-lights against the idea of annihilation. As an example, take Isaiah lvii, 16: "For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth; for the *spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made,*"—as if to say, "since it is impossible that the souls which I have made *can* fail before Me, as they must do if my wrath continue to burn, *therefore* I cannot be wroth forever." This text bears even more strongly against the idea of an endless and hopeless punishment than it does against the idea of annihilation; but as we reserve

the former for future consideration, we only remark here that horrible as either idea is, the latter is least so, and might be more generally accepted but that its rival has the prestige of traditional dogma to support it and give it the advantage.

CHAPTER V.

THE VARIOUS THEORIES AS TO THE CONDITION OF THE LOST—
CONTINUED.

A STILL milder form of opinion is now to be stated. *Third. Those who interpret the words as meaning a punishment that is æonian, or till the end of the æon, age, or dispensation.*

As we have presented the views of one, among the ablest and most philosophical of those who believe in the endless and hopeless punishment of the wicked, so now we present as the representative of the third view an able Scriptural discussion of the question recently published anonymously (by Lockwood Brooks & Co., Boston, 1876). It is by an "orthodox minister of the gospel," and is named "*Is eternal punishment unending?*" The author denies the doctrine of endless and hopeless punishment to be revealed in Scripture, and states his conclusion to be that of "nescience," viz: that the Bible, while teaching future punishment in terms sufficiently explicit and severe for the purposes of moral government, does not positively declare the duration of that punishment (preface). In other words, "that the Scriptures really leave the duration of the 'æonian punishment' an open question" (p. 83). The author states that the design of his "essay is a mere inquiry into facts," as to what the Bible teaches expressly or impliedly; and that "no entrance is designed into the metaphysical and ethical arguments which the subject invites and by

which it is often perplexed, but simply an inquiry into the answer which the Scripture returns to the question—*Is 'eternal punishment' absolutely endless?*" (preface). Lest any one should suppose the title of the argument to be one proposing a sort of identical equation, as if "eternal" necessarily means the same as "endless," he refers the reader to the sequel. The argument is confined almost entirely to a critical and exegetical discussion of Scripture texts bearing on the subject. The following is an outline of the argument.

There are many passages in our English Testaments that look like declarations of the endlessness of future punishment. At the head of the list stands Matthew xxv, 46: "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The question presents itself, whether our translators have correctly represented *the original words of our Lord*. Now these words "everlasting," "eternal," are here and everywhere in the Scriptures represented in the original by the single Greek adjective *αἰώνιον* (*æonion*)—a word anglicised by Tennyson *æonian*, so that the text above and all similar texts mean "æonian punishment" and "æonian life."

The adjective *æonian* is derived from the Greek noun *æon* (*αἰών*). The Old Testament was translated during the second and third centuries before Christ from the Hebrew into Greek. It is called the septuagint, and is designated by the numeral LXX—which was the Bible of the Apostles. The use of the word in the LXX will help us to understand its use in the Gospels and Epistles. If the word *æonian* has not a strict and uniform reference to *endless* duration in the LXX, we shall need a decisive reason for assigning it such a meaning in the New Testament. Before considering the meaning of the word, it may be remarked

that if *æon* be taken to mean eternity, *æonian* the adjective might well mean *belonging to eternity*; and *æonian punishment* might mean *the punishment taking place in eternity* (without any reference to its duration) as well as *the punishment that lasts through eternity*. But what does *æonian* mean in the Scripture? We find it to be of most elastic meaning. In Genesis xxi, 33, it is used of God—"the everlasting (*æonian*) God." In Ibid xvii, 8, of Abraham's title to Canaan—"an everlasting (*æonian*) possession." In Numbers xxv, 13, of Phinehas and his posterity—"an everlasting (*æonian*) priesthood." In Proverbs xxii, 28, of boundaries—"the ancient (*æonian*) landmark." In Habakkuk iii, 6, of "the perpetual (*æonian*) hills." Thus the word may denote any extent of duration, from a landmark to the Infinite God, and is to be interpreted therefore in respect to duration with reference to the word joined with it. In the New Testament it is used in the same way in reference to the ages past; as in 2 Tim. i, 9—"before the world began" or before *æonian* times. In regard then to the important text in Matthew, whether we understand that "*æonian punishment*" means simply *the punishment taking place in eternity*—a translation that the highest scholarship approves of—or whether we think that the word has *some* reference to duration also, we are far from obtaining from the word *æonian* any testimony to the *endlessness* of future punishment.

But the Greek like the English has its appropriate word, says our author, to "express with precision the idea of endlessness. When the endlessness of future punishment was first declared to be an article of the Christian faith, in the middle of the sixth century, the word *ateleutêtos* (*ἀτελεύτετος*—endless) was employed for that purpose—a word not found in the New Testament, but quite classical.

The word endless is found in our version in 1 Tim. i, 4—“endless genealogies”—where the original is *aperantos* (*ἀπέραντος*—interminable), and also in Heb. vii, 16—“endless life”—where the original is *akataleÿtos* (*ἀκατάλυτος*—indissoluble). * * * Can it be regarded as accidental and insignificant that the sacred writers never employed such terms in describing the future state, but confined themselves to what appears thus far as an elastic and ambiguous word—*æonian*?” (p. 7-8). “It is beyond all question a fact that demands to be accounted for before proceeding to fabricate out of a single ambiguous word of so varied an application as this *æonian*, a test either of doctrinal orthodoxy or of church communion” (p. 9).

But if the adjective *æonian* gives us no necessary idea of endlessness, let us see if the noun *æon*, from which it is derived, does so. This word is used by the LXX as the equivalent of the Hebrew word *'Olam*, which in the Hebrew Testament very frequently meant a *world-period* or *cycle*. In Ecclesiastes i, 4: “The earth abideth forever,” literally for the *'Olam* or cycle—LXX for the *æon*. In Psalm cxlv, 13: “Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,” literally a kingdom of all *'Olams* or cycles—LXX of all *æons*. In Exodus xl, 15: “Their anointing shall surely be for an everlasting priesthood,” literally for a priesthood of *'Olam* or a cycle—LXX a priestly anointing for the *æon* (but note that this *'Olam*, cycle, or *æon*, closed with the Mosaic dispensation.—Heb. vii, 11-12). In Psalm cxliii, 3: “Those that have been long dead,” literally the dead of *'Olam*, or, as we should say, “the dead of ages”—LXX the dead of *æon*. “The word *æon* accordingly retains in the New Testament this peculiar Hebraistic color which the LXX have given it” (p. 10). He then gives great numbers of instances from the New Testament, commencing

with Matthew xxviii, 20: "With you always to the end of the world" (end of the *æon*), and ending with Revelations iv, 9: "Who liveth forever and ever" (to the *æons* of the *æons*). He then states that an examination of all the passages in the New Testament in which the word occurs will yield the following results:

1. That it denotes a period of duration.
2. That it is used very frequently, much more often than by the classic Greek in the *plural*. This fact is in the way of the assertion that *æon* has inherently the idea of *infinite* duration, for only finite things can have a plural. We cannot speak of the coming eternities, but Paul speaks (Eph. ii, 7) of "the ages (*æons*) to come."
3. That the present world-period or course of things is spoken of as *this æon*, or the *æon*, or *an æon*.
4. That the period or course of things which is immediately to succeed the present is likewise called *that æon*, or *the æon*, or *the coming æon*.
5. That past duration, the course or courses of things that have proceeded the present, is called *the æon*, or *the æons*, or simply *æons*.
6. That future duration in its whole compass is described as a succession of *æons*.
7. That the regular phrase for unlimited duration—for *the æons*, or *for the æons of æons*—strictly denotes an indefinite succession of these finite periods or *æons*.
8. *That there is no single word that regularly carries the meaning of our word eternity.*

But it is said that the phrase *eis ton aiona* (εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα) —for the *æons*—translated in our version "forever," (as in John vi, 58), "uniformly denotes endless duration," or, as Dr. Robinson's "New Testament Lexicon" says, "for the *æon*" is to be regarded as "always implying duration with-

out end" (Lexn. p. 21). He cites as instance Heb. v, 6, where Christ is spoken of as a "priest forever." But the priesthood of Christ being, according to the Westminster catechism, one of the three offices which Christ as our Redeemer executes, it continues only so long as His redeeming work continues. It ends when redemption is accomplished. So Prof. Stuart, a high authority, remarks upon Heb. v, 6: "'For the *æon*' is to be taken in a qualified sense here, as often elsewhere,—compare Luke i, 33, with 1 Cor. xv, 24, 28. The priesthood of Christ will doubtless continue no longer than His mediatorial reign; for when His reign as mediator ceases, His whole work both as mediator and as priest will have been accomplished" (covenant Heb. p. 340).

Again, Dr. Robinson cites: "I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever (for the *æon*), even the Spirit of truth" (John xiv, 16). Now the mission of the Spirit *as comforter* is during the period that Christ has gone to prepare a place for His disciples. As God the Holy Ghost He will be with them forever, but as Comforter he comes during the absence of Christ. These are the terms of the office.

The third instance cited by Dr. Robinson is in 1 Pet. i, 25: "The word of the Lord endureth forever" (for the *æon*). It is true that the word of God endureth forever—for the *æons* of the *æons*—but the context shows that the thought in this text is simply that the word of God is not transitory, but stands to the world's end—just as in Deuteronomy xxix, 29: "The things which are revealed belong to us and our children forever,"—in which the extent of the *æon* is defined by the words immediately following: "That we may do all the words of this law" during the

period of the Mosaic dispensation, which ended near two thousand years ago.

In the New Testament our translators have stamped this limited meaning on *eis ton aiona*. See 1 Cor. viii, 13: "I will eat no meat while the world standeth" (for the *æon*). The Old Testament use of the phrase in the LXX exactly corresponds with this, and there occur, as Dr. Taylor Lewis observes, "immense extremes in the use of the word"—as in Exodus xxi, 6, the servant "shall serve his master forever" (for the *æon*), and in Deut. xxxii, 40, where God says "I live forever" (for the *æon*). Here temporal service and Divine existence are comprehended within the elastic limits of the same phrase.

"The result of a critical analysis of all the passages where the phrase occurs is this: it uniformly denotes not 'duration without end,' but *permanent* duration; *permanent according to the nature of the subject*, covering in one case merely the period during which a blasted fig-tree stands (Matt. xxi, 19), and in the other the eternity of our Lord. To affirm that it always implies duration without end, is as contrary to fact as to imply that it never does" (p. 16). If then the punishment of the wicked is to be measured by a term meaning duration according to the nature of the subject, "the very point on which we need information is, *how long is that?* How long with reference both to the desert of punishment and the nature of the punishment, and the capacity of the sufferer to endure punishment, and the character of Him who appoints the punishment?" (p. 7). "If it be assumed (1) that the *æonian* punishment means punishment forever, and (2) that this 'forever' means as long as the person who is punished exists, it remains to be shown (3) that his existence is itself endless before his punishment can be positively declared

to be an absolutely endless one, and the passage of Scripture that affirms this (3) yet remains to be discovered" (p. 17).

"It seems then that the adjective *æonian*, neither by itself, nor by what it derives from its noun *æon*, gives any testimony to the endlessness of future punishment. Futurity being represented in the New Testament as a succession of *æons*, 'æonian punishment,' so far as the phrase itself can carry its own interpretation, is altogether of indefinite duration,—all that the definition 'æonian' gives with any certainty being this, that this punishment *belongs to or occurs in* the æon or the æons to come" (p. 17).

If then the word *æonian* does not convey the idea of an endless punishment, do any words connected with it give it that signification? We find "*æonian fire*" (Matt. xviii, 8); "*æonian damnation*," where a more approved reading is "*æonian sin*" (Mark iii, 29); "*æonian judgment*" (Heb. vi, 2). None of these words add further definiteness to the adjective—indeed, the phrase "*æonian destruction*" (2 Thess. i, 9) needs the constant vigilance of the traditional school to rescue it from the abuse of the annihilationists.

There are some texts that *in our version* are as decisive as the great text in Matthew xxv, 46, already examined, but which *in the original* become quite as indefinite. Thus, in Mark ix, 43, "The fire that never shall be quenched," the word "never" is a contribution of our translators to the original word *asbestos* (ἀσβεστος). This may be translated "unquenched" as well as "unquenchable," and even if translated "unquenchable," the word may mean a fire that lasts very long, or is for the present beyond control, just as well as one that is literally endless. We often say that a fire rages with "unquenchable fury," which only

burns till its material is consumed. Isaiah uses the word (lxvi, 24) of the "carcasses" of rebels that were burned.

A similar addition to the force of the original has been made by our translators in Mark iii, 29: "Hath *never* forgiveness." The original in the most approved texts reads; "Hath not forgiveness for the *æon*, but is involved in an *æonian* sin." In the parallel text in Matthew xii, 32, the original fairly rendered reads: "It shall not be forgiven him either in this *æon* or in the one to be." Perhaps no text has been more strained beyond its legitimate import than John iii, 36: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." "Shall *not* see life" is assumed to mean "shall *never* see life." "The wrath of God abideth on him" is assumed to be the same as "abideth *evermore*." Thus have orthodox men taught their opponents to wrest the Scriptures.

"There are, however, three texts in the New Testament, in which the form of words elsewhere denoting unlimited duration is used in what seem to be descriptions of future punishment":

1. "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever (for *æons* of *æons*)"—Rev. xiv, 11.

2. "And her [Babylon's] smoke rose up (literally rises up) forever and ever (for the *æons* of the *æons*)"—Rev. xix, 3.

3. "And the devil (with the beast and false prophet) shall be tormented day and night forever and ever for the *æons* of the *æons*)"—Rev. xx, 10 (p. 23).

If we deal with these texts as investigators rather than as advocates, we will not find them to give additional strength to the idea of endless punishment. The first two may be considered as one. The original of the imagery is found in Isaiah xxxiv, 10, in reference to the judgment on

Idumea, "the smoke thereof shall go up forever" (Hebrew "for 'olam;" LXX, "time of æon). "The New Testament prophet simply intensifies the ancient figure to 'æons of æons.' But of course neither Isaiah nor John meant literally smoke. The 'smoke' of torment means a *sign* of torment, just as smoke is a sign of fire. A sign of torment or punishment, then, is to 'rise up' forever and ever. Here, now, if we no more desire to exaggerate the declarations of Scripture than to evaporate them, we have to ask the question—does this mean any more than that the punishment is to be *so signal*, so memorable, that its sign or memorial, rising up in remembrance will be before intelligent minds forever? We find warrant for this view in Jude 7, where we read that 'Sodom and Gomorrah * * are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal (æonian) fire.' The fires that destroyed these cities soon ceased to burn. But so signal was the catastrophe, so proverbial in after ages became the names of Sodom and Gomorrah as perpetual monuments of wrath, though buried out of sight, that the transient fire storm which overwhelmed them, became in the living uses of history and of moral instruction a fire truly æonian, the same in moral effect as a fire literally everlasting" (p. 24).

"The remaining text is unique. The devil, the beast and the false prophet (who or whatever may be denoted by this infernal trinity) are to be 'tormented day and night forever.' * * * But taking the words at their face value, as we are bound to take all the words of Holy Writ, it appears that these three enemies of God (who, by the way, do not seem to be human beings) are to be tormented endlessly. *Are we now to take this as a literal statement of fact?* * * * In the context we read that 'death and hell (*Hades*, elsewhere meaning the place of departed souls)

were cast into the lake of fire' (verse 14). Is not one of these neighboring expressions probably just as literal or just as figurative as the other? Or must we believe that John mixed things here, so that the plainest prose and the most high wrought poetry stand in contiguity, with no sign of transition to guide the interpreter? * * * How many such proof-texts from the poetical imagery of a book of promise, written for the consolation of a martyr church, would be sufficient to counterbalance the omission from Gospel or Epistle, of the single plain didactic statement we are searching for?" (p. 25).

"There is, however, a text in the Epistle of Jude (verse 6) which some suppose of special weight—'The angels which kept not their first estate; * * * he hath reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day.' The value of this text is thought to lie in its supplying a decisive synonym of the uncertain term *æonian*—for everlasting does not stand here as the equivalent of *æonian*, but for a word, *aidios* (ἀίδιος), which we may anglicise as *aidian*" (p. 26). *Aidian* is a word "applied to the eternity of God (see Rom. i, 20), 'even His eternal (*aidian*) power and Godhead'" (p. 27). But so is *æonian* applied to the eternal God. If, however, *aidian* means uniformly everlasting—though it appears in the New Testament only in these two texts—*why is it never applied as descriptive of the human destiny in the future state?* In the "writings of the Apostles the futurity of mankind is only *æonian*" (p. 27). In regard to the text from Jude, Barnes says in his *notes*: "This passage does not in itself prove that the punishment of the rebel angels will be eternal, but merely that they are kept in a dark prison, * * * which is to exist forever with reference to the final trial"

(p. 28). So that he does not construe it here as necessarily everlasting.

Our author, having thus concluded that no text in Scripture teaches exclusively the doctrine of an endless future punishment, comes to the inquiry whether the New Testament teaches it by direct implication.

He then admits that what Dr. Lewis calls "an aspect of finality," appears there with reference to the future of the wicked. He cites: "If ye believe not, ye shall die in your sins;" "Whither I go ye cannot come" (John viii, 21, 24); that a man might "lose himself or be cast away" (Luke ix, 25); Apostates are likened to land that bears only thorns, "whose end is to be burned" (Heb. vi, 8); and then the Apostle goes on to say that for such "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation that shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x, 25, 26). The judgment proceeds according to "the deeds done in the body" (2 Cor. v, 10); "whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven; but whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. x, 32, 33). All such passages may be made to favor "an aspect of finality," but if we are seeking *proof-texts*, rather than *pretexts*, we find that these texts agree as well with the doctrine of annihilation as they do with that of unending punishment; and the restorationists also may plausibly claim that they agree also with their view. But suppose not, we must still inquire if this finality is *absolute* or *relative*? "Does it cover merely an indefinite *period* however protracted, or rather *duration that never comes to a period*? Is it a finality for a single *æon* or more (compare again Mark iii, 29—'hath not forgiveness *for the æon*, but is

involved in æonian sin'), or 'for the æons of the æons?' If the punishment of the wicked were to be perpetuated for an æon or æonian period of great duration, that prospect might not be inconsistent with the Scriptural representation of the disposition made of the wicked at the last day as a finality. A finality no doubt, but *how much of a one?* is the question which we now reverently put to the Holy Oracle" (p. 35).

"Looking forward then into the indefinite succession of the æons, we ask, is there any clear, decisive word of Scripture that shuts us up to the certainty that the result of the present life is an *absolute* finality to the lost?" (p. 36). If we point to the declaration, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb. x, 26), we are challenged to show conclusively how far forward this "no more" reaches. Is it a *nevermore?* or may it not mean, in accordance with so many other Scriptures, "no more" for the *æon*, or for an indefinite period? And so in the text: "Ye shall die in your sins, whither I go ye cannot come" (John viii, 21), we are reminded that when Christ gave this warning he abstained from uttering the conclusive *never*. Many texts have been misused and forced beyond their plain sense, in support of the doctrine of endless punishment—for example John v, 29: "They that have done evil to a resurrection of *damnation*, which, in truth, means a resurrection of *judgment*." In like manner it has been hastily inferred from "the great gulf fixed" (Luke xxi, 26) between Lazarus and Dives, that Dives himself was "fixed" (Greek—made fast) forever in the "place of torment." The scene appears to be laid in the middle state between death and the final judgment, and "fixed" may signify what existed during that state. Nothing whatever is said of his condition beyond the middle state.

Often the language of *emotion* or of *parables* is put upon the rack of strict construction, in support of the extreme view. Such testimony in its favor is supposed by some to be given by Christ's remark about Judas (Matt. xxvi, 24)—“It had been good for that man if he had not been born.” We are ignorant of the “special thought that prompted Christ's remark. He spoke as he felt in view of what he saw coming upon Judas. Who of us is competent to say what it was in Judas' situation that most impressed the Master's heart? The remark is however, be it observed, as consonant with the theory of Judas' ultimate extinction as with the theory of his endless punishment” (p. 41).

“No more can one fairly deny that Christ's remark about Judas is applicable with reference merely to the present life, to men whom society has determined to put in the pillory of ‘shame and everlasting contempt’ (Dan. xii, 2). Is it not perfectly just to say of a traitor like Benedict Arnold, with reference solely to his infamous place in his country's history, ‘It had been good for *that man* if he had never been born’?” (p. 41-2).

Attempts at strict construction of the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matt. xviii, 23, 35) have led interpreters of different schools in opposite directions. In verse 34, “delivered him to the tormentors *till* he should pay all that was due,” Universalists have found their doctrines, Romanists their purgatory, others the doctrine of endless punishment—all in the pregnant monosyllable “*till*.” The Universalist and the Romanist assume that the debt will sometime be paid. While all the time the parable meant simply to teach that he “shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy” (James ii, 13). “The history of the interpretation of such a passage exhibits the spell which any prepossession as to the contents of Scrip-

ture always casts upon the interpreter, however endeavoring to construe language strictly" (p. 43).

"Another passage similarly misused is Matt. v, 25, 26—especially the last clause—'thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.' Professor Bartlett, following Meyer, regards this as teaching 'an endless imprisonment,' and that 'the removal of sin from the prisoner is an impossibility.' Theodore of Mopsuestia, the greatest theologian of the Eastern Church in the fifth century, took just the opposite view, 'for never would he have said 'till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing,' were it not possible for us, paying the penalty of our faults, to be freed from them.' At the root of each view of the passage lies the mistaken presumption, that it teaches something about future punishment and its duration. Curious indeed are the contortions of commentators to explain on this presumption who the 'adversary' is. Clement thought he was the Devil, Augustine thought he was God, and so on. But the reference of the text to future punishment at all is as imaginary as in that other text, which is worth mentioning here, only lest some reader should suppose that we do not know how he relies on it, viz: 'If the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there shall it be'" (Eccle. xi, 3).

"Still another passage where the reference, which some think they find to a changeless future state, is wholly foreign to the original thought is in Rev. xxii, 11: 'He that is unjust, let him be unjust still,' etc. Lange (Comment. p. 397) interprets it as follows: 'If we seek for a common fundamental thought that shall lie at the basis of all four propositions, it is contained in the following words: 'since the judgment is at the door, let every person

prepare himself for it after his own free choice." That this very idea indirectly offers to the wicked the strongest admonition to repent is self-evident. Dr. N. Adams very fitly remarks: 'Among the closing words of the Bible these accents fall on the ears like the last notes of a bell that calls to the house of prayer.' The context (verses 10, 12) certifies that this call is to an immediate, present decision of the future state. That this is an unalterable decision for an endless future, may be true, but, as a conclusion from this text, it is reached only by one of those surprising jumps by which some expositors are wont to leave their texts far behind" (p. 43-4).

Our author thus reaches the conclusion that Scripture does not either expressly, or by necessary implication, reveal to us an endless future punishment for the wicked.

He then discusses the question whether we are bound to infer it as the natural result of sin. This he affirms is a speculative question, and cannot be definitely decided. We can no more say now, as we could in considering what the *Scriptures actually say or abstain from saying*, what is *certain*, but only what is *probable*. And we must observe that the "Scripture has abstained from explicitly answering this question, and has left us to draw our own inferences from what it has revealed of the nature and tendency of sin to perpetuate its own punishment" (p. 53).

After dwelling on the self-perpetuating nature of sin, he says: "If now we set aside the question of a possible restoration, there are before us two alternative suppositions, and only two which may be expressed in a triple form, viz: either this destructive work of sin runs on without end, or its tendency is to a limit beyond which there is nothing more to be destroyed, and consequently nothing more to suffer. Either this worsening growth of sin con-

tinues unlimited, until even the least of lost sinners becomes an inconceivable colossus of iniquity, a vastly intensified Satan, or it stops somewhere. Either the Almighty exerts his power to preserve hopeless sufferers in existence for the sole purpose that they may perpetually endure destruction; or at length he permits them, when their disease has run its course and done its work, to lose their existence, which can no more be anything but to them a curse, to the universe a discord, and to him a regret" (p. 54-5).

"We affirm with the fullest persuasion, that a doctrine so fraught with horror as the *endless* conscious misery of fellow-creatures, is not to be accepted as a tenet of the Christian faith on any less conclusive evidence than an unmistakable word of God. And none such can we find. Future punishment is indeed most positively announced by all the symbolism of pain and woe. The *duration* and *result* of it are shrouded in a dread impenetrable mystery by the terms that describe it. * * * The single point of the *endlessness* of the æonian punishment is not yet revealed. It is not disproved by aught that is said. It may be true for aught that we yet know. But until we have received a positive revelation of it, we are not required to accept it as an article of the Christian faith. For aught that we yet know it may not be true" (p. 61).

"We speak Scripturally of 'eternal punishment' only when we drop from the phrase the idea of *duration*, and mean simply the punishment *taking place in eternity*. That this is no modern liberal use of the word, our English Bibles bear witness in the phrase 'eternal judgment' (Heb. vi, 2), which Robinson's lexicon refers to the 'judgment of the last day,' and which means simply the judgment *taking place in eternity*" (note to p. 55).

We are then left at liberty to "choose whichever of these

two alternatives our own reason may approve, viz: the ultimate extinction of the sinning soul by the spreading cancer of its own decay, *or* the infinite continuance of the 'destruction' of a finite being, upheld in endless being by Almighty power, in order that it may be endlessly destroyed; like that 'Prometheus bound,' according to the Greek poets, on Mount Caucasus, whose liver, perpetually devoured by vultures, and as perpetually growing to be devoured unceasingly, gave an endless banquet to them, and to him an endless torment. He who can be certain that these opposite alternatives bound the diverse possibilities of the case, will perhaps not be at a loss which to choose" (p. 62).

Finally our author says that the conclusion he has reached may be regarded by some as met in some measure, by the historical objection. That objection may be presented "in some such form as this—it is said: The doctrine of eternal punishment is not attractive to any mind. How comes it then that the best minds of the church have for many ages recognized it in the New Testament, if indeed it be not there? This question, though weighty, is neither unanswerable nor difficult. The conclusions of the best minds as to what the Scriptures actually teach are liable, especially in uncritical ages, to be vitiated by wrong translations" (p. 64). Of which he gives instances, for example that of Augustine drawing from the Latin version of Rom. v, 12, and transmitting to after ages the notion that "all sinned in Adam" ("in whom all sinned"); whereas in the Greek it reads "because all sinned." He then, after giving other instances, points out the erroneous notions that have come down to us from these same "best minds"—such as the damnation of infants, purgatory and the like; and the lower culture, moral and intellectual, of

ancient than of modern times, under which harsher views of justice, and of punishment, human and divine, prevailed there.

But if we are to be greatly influenced on such questions by traditional views, the weight of authority is against the idea of endless punishment. The Greek was the vernacular tongue of most of these writers, and they use the same word which is used in the Scriptures—æonian—in their views about future punishment. In addition to this we have the positive testimony of many of them against an endless punishment. He cites from their writings passages which show that Justin Martyr regarded æonian punishment as *indefinitely* rather than *infinitely* long, and in some cases at least designed to terminate by the will of God in loss of existence; that Augustine himself entertained views much milder than that of the modern idea of Hell, and in his commentary on Matt. xii, 32, used this language: "For it would not be truly said of some that they are forgiven neither in this age (*seculo*) nor in the future, were there not some who though not in this are forgiven in the future." See the passage discussed in Lange's Comment on Matt., pp. 227-229 (see p. 20, note)—that Irenæus seems to have anticipated with Justin Martyr, that the wicked would *ultimately* cease to exist—that the Alexandrian school of theology, as represented by its two great teachers, Clement and Origen (A. D. 253), was by far the greatest light of the first three centuries, and was, as is too well known to need proof thoroughly imbued with restorationism (see Neander's Church History, I, 656)—that the same is true of the Church of Antioch, a century and a half later, as represented by Diodorus of Tarsus, and especially by the "Master of the East" Theodore of Mopsuestia (died A. D. 427), whom Dr. Dorner

calls the first oriental teacher of his time—that Gregory of Nyssa (died A. D. 395), whom Dr. Schaff calls “one of the most eminent theologians of his time” (History of Christian Church, III, 906), expounded and maintained the doctrine of a universal restoration “with the greatest logical ability and acuteness, in works written expressly for the purpose” (Neander’s Church History, II, 677)—that “in the oriental church, in which, with the exception of those subjects immediately connected with the doctrinal controversies, there was greater freedom and latitude of development [and in which also, we are to remember, the original language of the New Testament was the tongue in which every church teacher taught and wrote], many respectable church teachers still stood forth without injuring their reputation for orthodoxy, as advocates of the opposite doctrine [restorationism] until the time when the Origenistic disputes caused the agreement with Origen in respect to this point also to be considered as something decidedly heretical” (Neander’s Church History, II, 676)—that the Lutheran Dr. J. C. Doderlein states the historical point as follows: “the more highly distinguished in Christian antiquity any one was for learning, so much the more did he cherish and defend the hope of future torments some time ending.” After mentioning some distinguished names, Dr. D. goes on to say: “This, however, was not the view of a few persons and one privately entertained, but general, and maintained by many advocates. Augustine, at least (‘Enchiridion,’ ch. 112), testifies that ‘some, nay, very many, pity with human feeling the everlasting punishment of the damned, and do not believe that it is to be so.’ The following age, although a belief in perpetual torments prevailed by authority, yet clearly did not lack milder views” (Instit Theol. chr. II, pp. 199–202)—and finally,

that the authority by which the doctrine was finally imposed on the church was of this sort: "The endlessness of future punishment was first *authoritatively* announced as an article of the orthodox creed in the year 544, at the instance of the Emperor Justinian I, an authority in theological matters of equal respectability with King Henry VIII of England" (p. 78).

Our author then, in another chapter, declares his dissent from the restorationist view, as *not to be proved by Scripture*. His conclusion from the whole discussion is, that on the subject of the condition of the lost, we have no positive evidence from Scripture of anything but a punishment, *the duration and result* of which is shrouded in an impenetrable mystery.

Fourth. Those who interpret the words as meaning a punishment, or suffering, indefinite as to its duration, but who believe also that it is one enduring as long as the sinful temper endures, and terminable in the future life, as in this, by repentance and restoration to God, through Christ.

We are not able to give in detail the views of those who may hold to the above opinion, because, while reading freely on the other side, we have all our lives abstained studiously from reading the works of either Universalists or Restorationists. The proposition is an expression of those principles which we hope will be found to be sustained by the sequel, aided by what has been already written.

CHAPTER VI.

SIN NOT NECESSARILY SELF-PERPETUATING, AND ITS PUNISHMENT NOT THEREFORE UNENDING.

THE demonstration in the last chapter that Scripture neither by its terms, nor by necessary implication, teaches the infinitely unending character of future punishment, seems to be complete. We are at liberty then to seek for some other view in regard to its duration, which shall harmonize both with reason and Scripture. The anonymous author of that argument prefers, with good reason, the view that the *quantitative* duration of future punishment is not intended to be revealed at all; but that the punishment, so far as indicated by the words describing it, is to be one "*taking place in eternity.*" But even he seems to be trammelled by the idea that an infinite punishment *might* have been definitely revealed to us by God, by the suitable use of the words "never," "never ending," "everlasting," and the like, had He seen fit to do so; and he repeatedly speaks of how near the Scriptures come to such a revelation without actually making it. From this he draws an argument in favor of his views, viz: that since it *might* have been done and *has not* been done distinctly and indisputably, therefore he is right in supposing that it was not intended to be done by the language which others rely on to prove it; and that so we are left simply with "nescience" on the subject.

We submit that it is true, not only that Scripture does not reveal expressly or impliedly an infinite future punish-

ment, as he has so clearly proved, but that such a punishment *could not have been definitely revealed by such words or by any word.* We have already seen from Dr. Bledsoe what is approved both instinctively and by our reason, that God cannot work a contradiction. Now the mind of man is by his very nature limited and finite, and an endless punishment, or an endless thing of any sort, is by its nature infinite. Again, human language is like the human mind, limited and imperfect, and cannot therefore be made the medium of a perfect revelation. To say that God could convey a perfect revelation of an infinite thought, through the imperfect medium of human language, into the finite mind, is to say that which is triply contradictory in terms. Indeed the very words which we use—*endless eternal, infinite*—can by no possibility convey to our minds anything more than the idea of *indefiniteness*. A great modern thinker—the late Rev. William Sparrow, D. D.—in a sermon on “*subjects that do not concern us,*” says: “time we understand, but eternity we do not understand; it is not even thinkable. It is not, as perhaps we may have been in the habit of supposing, a mere elongation of time.
* * * We speak, indeed, of eternity in application to man, but not in its proper and distinctive meaning; we mean by it in such case, only time with its limits undetermined,” etc. (sermons p. 284). Of the eternal God himself, what can we understand except that he is beyond our conception great, wise, good and perfect? Of his existence from eternity to eternity, from æon to æon, what can we understand except that He has existed *from* a period and will endure *to* a period beyond our conception? What else but a recognition of this incapacity of our minds, is meant by that question in Scripture “Canst thou by searching find out God?” (Job ii, 7). As in regard to time, so it is in regard

to space. We call space infinite or unending. Can we understand anything of it except that it expands *indefinitely*? Conceive a great white ball to be launched with irresistible force by an Almighty hand, from our world out into space. Watch it as it moves indefinitely on its way; follow it with the eye as it goes through our solar system, stretches away through constellations and sun clusters, and still moves on, on, on through the lights and intervening darknesses of myriads of nebulæ; pursue it; wait on it till eye and brain reel, and the mind is wearied. Our feeble powers will compel us at last to say—"it *must* find an end *somewhere*;" but even then the exhausted mind will react enough to say on the instant—"there *must* be more space *beyond that end*." Yes, truly, the idea of eternity is "un-thinkable," and therefore *incommunicable*.

But some one will say—"if this be so, what warrant have we for the idea of what we call the unending life of the blest? We see in Matt. xxv, 46, the language, 'these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment: but the righteous into life *eternal*'—thus using equivalent terms for the two conditions. If a definite idea of what we call unending punishment cannot be conveyed to us by human language, neither can a definite idea of what we call the infinite and unending bliss of heaven be so conveyed." We admit the consequence. Not only so, but in the original Greek, the terms are not merely equivalent but identical. But these terms may mean simply the life or punishment "taking place in eternity;" and if not, we do not rest the duration of the bliss of heaven on any such vague and indefinite terms. They were not intended to convey, because they *cannot be made* to convey an idea of quantitative duration. The duration of the bliss of heaven depends on far clearer and more definite declarations of Scripture than these. We

rest it on those unspeakably grand and glorious texts which declare that the redeemed shall be partakers of Christ's glory; that they are one with God in Christ; that they are "*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ*" (Rom. viii, 17), and the like. Surely no more complete and perfect assurance could be given of their infinite reward. They cannot desire, nor is it possible for language to convey, a fuller idea of happiness and security. If their blessed state shall endure as long, and be as full of glory as the heirship of Christ, all further words are beggared.

Though it seems clear, then, that a punishment *quantitative* as to its duration *is not* revealed, yet it seems equally clear that a punishment *qualitative* as to its duration *is* revealed—that is to say, a punishment self-executory, the result of sin, and *enduring as long as the sinful temper endures*. Dr. Bledsoe agrees to this. He puts it thus: "We must take our stand on the position that Omnipotence cannot necessitate holiness, and must have recourse to rewards and punishments to secure it, otherwise all evil and suffering will remain an inexplicable enigma," &c. (Theodicy p. 306-7). Agreed—but what is the *degree* of the punishment? He replies by another question—"Does not the position that a man, a poor, weak, fallible creature, deserves an infinite punishment, an eternity of torments, for each evil thought or word, carry its own refutation along with it?" (Ib. p. 296). But he says further, "it will be conceded that if the finally impenitent should continue to sin forever, then they forever deserve to reap the rewards of sin" (Ib. p. 304). Agreed—but will they necessarily continue to sin forever? To this he answers—"This is one part of the Scripture doctrine of future punishments, that those who endure them will never cease to sin and rebel against the authority of God's law" (Ib. p. 304);

that "the soul of the guilty * * * will be consigned to the regions of the lost, because, by its own repeated acts of transgression, it has made sure of its eternal continuance in sinning" (Ib. p. 305). He further says: "The spectacle of punishment for a single day, it will be admitted, would be justified on the ground that it was necessary to support for a single day a government, especially if that government were vast in extent and involved stupenduous interests. But if suffering for a single day may be justified on such ground, then the exigencies of such a government for two days, would justify a punishment for two days, and so on *ad infinitum*. Hence the doctrine of eternal punishment in common with the eternal moral government of God is not a greater anomaly than temporal punishments in relation to temporal governments" (Ib. p. 307). The analogy between temporal governments and the "eternal moral government of God" does not "run on all fours," because the temporal ruler is in no way responsible for the citizenship of the culprit. He did not make him a subject foreknowing that by becoming so he would surely become a criminal. This, however, is a prime factor in the investigation of the moral government of God. Still the position may be admitted to be sound in respect of both governments; provided, first, that the creation of the criminal can be justified in connection with such foreknowledge; and, second, that the penalty annexed to the offence be merely sufficient to vindicate the authority of the government, or to "support it." But Dr. Bledsoe admits that the principle of the divine government rests, not on the visitation of each offence with an infinite punishment, for that this would be unjust; but he rests it on the assumption, as we have seen, that those who endure it (that is, all who go into the other world impenitent) "*will*

never cease to sin and rebel against the authority of God's law." If this be not true, then he does not accept or recognize as just the doctrine of eternal punishment, for he further states that "no one except those who place themselves beyond the possibility of salvation by their own evil deeds is ever lost" (Ib. p. 331).

Admitting now, as we do, that the punishment of sin must endure whether in this world or the next, as long as the sinful temper endures, let us see if we are bound to accept the assertion that the "finally impenitent" (those who leave this world in their sins) will *certainly continue to sin forever*. Dr. Bledsoe declares that this is "one part of the Scripture doctrine of future punishments" (Ib. p. 304), but does not state the Scripture texts on which he relies. If it be true, it must be so either because sin is *in its nature* surely self-propagating, or because there is something *in man's nature or circumstances* that makes it so. Now we deny that there is any statement in Scripture which explicitly, or, by necessary implication, teaches that sin either here or hereafter is *surely or certainly* constantly progressive. In Prov. v, 22, it is said that "his own iniquities shall take the wicked himself," and "he shall be holden with the cords of his own sins;" and in 2 Pet. ii, 14, he is spoken of as one "having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin." But a reference to the original will show that this is not a doctrinal or prophetic declaration that there is *any* sinner who *cannot* or *will not* cease from sin, but is only a description of those who are constantly sinning. The *verb* "cannot" is not used in the original Greek, but the *adjective*, denoting a constant or ceaseless habit; just as we say of any one possessed of a bad habit, he is *constantly* doing so and so, he is *ceaselessly* doing so and so, he is *everlastingly* doing so

and so. All such texts declare, what is the experience of us all, that the habit of sinning, like every other habit, is a growing one, and if not restrained carefully, has a *tendency* to self-perpetuation—that sin is like a disease of the body, a fretting sore or cancer, which tends to enlarge itself, and will do so unless it is cauterized or extirpated. But there is no text in Scripture that describes this disease of sin as surely self-perpetuating, either in this world or in the world to come—no text that describes it as a disease that is certainly fatal and immedicable even by the great Physician. On the contrary, all the threatenings and promises of Scripture are based upon our assumed capacity to check its ravages, by God's help, and it is a matter of daily experience that this is done. If this were not so, then no man could escape. Once inoculated with the deadly poison of a single sin, his eternal ruin would be inevitable, and among all the myriads of our race, there would not be one that could be saved. Such a doctrine would "shut the gates of mercy on mankind," in this world, no less than in the world to come. This is the inevitable consequence of asserting that sin, *by its very nature*, is surely self-propagating—a consequence to the full as horrible as the doctrine of election and reprobation, against which Dr. Bledsoe expends so successfully his great strength.

If then sin be not, by its own nature, certainly self-propagating, the doctrine that the finally impenitent "will never cease to sin" must be due, if true, to some change in man's nature wrought by his departing from this world impenitent. *Can* there be any such change? Body and soul are indeed essential parts of man, but the body is only the tabernacle, the garment of the soul. The soul is the animating principle, and the seat of all the moral faculties

and endowments of man. Its possession of these faculties in no way depends on its connection with the body, however essential that connection may be. When dissolution comes it is simply a temporary severance of that connection; a putting off by the soul of its earthly clothing. How can we conceive that this severance can deprive the soul of any of its moral attributes? Nay, do we not know that it cannot be so? If, when we depart hence, we are incapable of repentance, *one of the essential qualities of our nature as moral and responsible beings*, why should we suppose that we would then possess any of the other faculties which now belong to us? If one shall be extinguished, why not the rest? And why, least of all, should the capacity for repentance be that one? Surely the motive to repentance will be stronger there than here, if we have any just conception of the future state at all. We shall then see "face to face" all the truths which we see here only "through a glass, darkly." If we may repent here, but may not repent there, where we shall see the beauty of holiness and the ugliness of sin better than we do here; or if we may not have there that sorrow for sin which is the first step to repentance here, it must be because the faculty itself has been extinguished. But the destruction of one of our faculties, its hopeless ruin, would be, so far as our identity is concerned, the destruction of them all, for the completeness of the moral being would be destroyed. On such a supposition we would be new creatures, and, therefore, not responsible for the sins committed by the former creatures here. This would be equivalent to annihilation; for we must either be the same beings there that we are here, that is, with all our essential attributes unimpaired, or else—there is no other conclusion—the former being has passed away. How then should sin prevent our repentance in the future life any more than

in this? Thousands and thousands of men, who have sinned ceaselessly and grossly to extreme old age, have (thank God) repented at last, and gone to the bliss of the redeemed. Few, indeed, as compared with any given number may do so, but on the whole they may be numbered by thousands. To doubt it would be to doubt the power of the cross of Christ, and its adaptation to our fallen state. On the other hand, there are as many thousands whose lives have been in all moral respects such as to command the respect and admiration of men, who have yet departed without accepting Christ's salvation. Take the case of the young ruler who ran and kneeled to Christ himself, to know what he should do "to inherit eternal life" (Mark x, 17-22). He was rich in this world, having "great possessions." And yet, though surrounded by corruption and beset by temptations to lusts which he could easily have gratified, he had led a strictly moral life, having kept with a godly loyalty all the commandments which Christ named to him *from his youth*. He must have said this truthfully, for the Divine Redeemer knew his heart, and when he declared his manner of life, "Christ beholding him, loved him." Though he rejected Christ's advice on account of his love of his possessions, as most of us in his place would have done, yet he evidently did so sorrowfully and reluctantly. He sinned, it is true, for covetousness, which is idolatry, is as damning as any of the offences which we call "gross sins," if not more so; but many of the life-long sinners to whom we have referred committed habitually, no doubt, not only the sin of covetousness, but the many others also from which this young man had been free. It is true indeed that if one "offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James ii, 10), because his offence is that he has set at naught the obligation of the law; but yet it is equally true,

that when we are weighing the force of the habit of sinning, and the capacity to turn from it, the difference is broad and important in favor of the young man we are considering. The tendency of sin and of sin alone is to harden the heart, and make it more difficult for us, in proportion to the inveteracy and abundance of our sins, to repent and turn to Christ; and thus the difficulty in the way of the life-long sinner is comparatively much greater than in that of the younger and less-hardened sinner. Can we suppose then that if dissolution had overtaken that young man who kneeled to Christ immediately after his interview with Him—that is to say, while still in a moral frame so comparatively pure as to command the Saviour's approbation—there would have been anything *in his nature* or *in the nature of sin* which would render it more difficult or even as difficult for him to repent in the other world as it was for the life-long sinner to repent in this?

Nay, what warrant has any one to say that after a life of sinning here, however long, a man may turn to God and live; but that within five minutes after he has passed the veil that opens to him *in all its reality* his true relations to his God, he has lost the blessed privilege and capacity of returning to him? True, he will not do so till his hard heart has been broken by suffering, and moved by gratitude for the Saviour's love; and it *may be* that in some cases long ages of rebellion will pass away before it is so; but there is in Scripture and in what we know of man's nature, and of the nature of sin, no reason why, in *any* case, the hope of his doing so is to be excluded. This life is described by Scripture as a scene of probation, of trial, of discipline for our good. This discipline is made effectual by God's providences, as we call them—that is (among other things), by difficulties, by disappointments,

by the sufferings and sorrows which sin produces, by the stings of conscience, by the Blessed Spirit's influences and His display of the love of Christ for the sinner even in the midst of his ingratitude and rebellion. Now, can we say that these things will be inoperative or ineffectual yonder? On the contrary, do we not understand that these very sort of things make up the sufferings of the world to come? If their legitimate tendency here is reformation, why should not their operation on the very same nature be so there?

The Scriptures speak of the state of the wicked both here and hereafter as a state of death. As we have already seen (in chap. ii), death, in the Scripture sense, is a condition of the soul, an alienation from the "life of God"; and what *we* call death—the dissolution of the flesh—is in truth only a resulting incident of death. Now, the Scriptures also speak of death here and hereafter *in the same terms*, and describe it as due in both cases *to the same cause*, viz: "enmity against God." It is sin which causes and increase of sin which increases that enmity, and not the fact of dissolution or what we call death. On the contrary, so far as our experience goes, the apprehension and the approach of dissolution both tend to abate it. If this be so, why should the one condition be capable of revival and the other not? In the one case it *may* be more difficult than in the other; but why should it be absolutely impossible in the one, and frequent in the other? But, further, the Scriptures not only speak of death here and hereafter in the same terms, but they *never* speak of "*death eternal*," "*death everlasting*." No such coinage as that ever came from the pure mint of God's Holy Word, but is the counterfeit currency of man. The anonymous author, whose book we have reviewed, notices this in the following

language: "The Scriptures, which speak freely of *æonian sin, judgment, fire, destruction*, never use the expression *æoniân death*. The phrase 'second death,' four times occurring in the revelation of John (as Rev. ii, 11), only shows how near the Scripture comes to that other expression without using it, and serves to make more marked the thorough avoidance of it. Yet theology uses it, or what is meant to be its equivalent, and freely speaks of 'everlasting death.' So our hymn—

'Nothing is worth a thought beneath
But how I may escape the death
That never, never dies.'

It is difficult for one who believes that the sacred writers were under a divine superintendance in their use of language to avoid believing that it is not without reason that the Scriptures invariably decline to employ a phraseology which the interpreters of Scripture have found so appropriate to their own views" (p. 58).

Especially is this difficult when the opposite phrase "everlasting life" and similar expressions are so constantly used. This surely needs accounting for if it be true that sin *certainly* perpetuates itself, or is perpetuated to endless and hopeless death. We account for it by the belief that no being in God's universe ever is or can be condemned to a state where repentance and return to his Creator and his God is impossible.

Dr. Bledsoe indeed uses great moderation on this momentous subject. After quoting from Butler the statement that there is a certain bound, which being transgressed, there remains no place for repentance "in the natural course of things," he proceeds; "and may we not add, nor in the supernatural course of things either; and there only

remains a certain fearful looking for of judgment? *As this may be the case for aught we know* (italics ours), nay, as it *seems so probable* that it is the case, no one is authorized to pronounce endless sufferings unjust, unless he can first show that the object of them has not brought upon himself an eternal continuance in the practice of sinning—in other words, unless he can first show that the sinner does not doom himself to an eternity of sinning” (Theodicy p. 305). Now, though this is moderate, is it not putting the burden on the wrong shoulders? Is it not requiring the proof of a negative? May we not rather say that “no one is authorized to pronounce endless sufferings *just*, unless he can first show that the object of them *has* brought upon himself an eternal continuance in the practice of sinning.” We think so, and as we have said before, Dr. Bledsoe has not done this. We have endeavored to assume the misplaced burden, and to “prove the negative,” so far as such a thing is capable of proof.

If, notwithstanding all this, it still be said that the nature either of sin or of man is such that dying impenitent he *cannot* or *will not* afterwards repent, then the reply is that it is no vindication of the holiness of God to say, as Dr. Bledsoe does, that he is not responsible for evil because after he created man he could not prevent his sinning; or to say that he could not coerce man or necessitate his holiness. For, though this is true, the answer is that he could have forborne to *create* a being, whose utter and hopeless ruin immediately after his creation he could not prevent. It is no just reply to this to say, as Dr. Bledsoe does, “To this we answer that God did not choose to prevent sin in this way, but to create the world exactly as he did, though he foresaw the fall and all its consequences, because the highest good of his universe required the

creation of such a world" (Ib. p. 203); because the "sufferings of the guilty" are "connected with the majesty and glory of God's universal and eternal empire" (Ib. p. 307); or because "this world with all its wickedness and woe is but a dim speck of vitality in a boundless dominion of light that is necessary to the glory and perfection of the whole" (Ib. p. 207). To those who look at this world as we do, not from the outskirts of a "boundless dominion," whence it looks like a "dim speck," but from its very bosom, it is by no means of such little consequence; and even if it were, we are to remember that we are considering this question, not as one *de minimis*, concerning which justice and law care not, but as one of indescribable importance to us, and as one to be weighed on the principles of that justice which sways everything in God's "universal and eternal empire," *the least* as well as *the greatest*. Yes, blessed be God! the microscope has illustrated the wondrous truth taught us by His Holy Word, that to Him *great* and *small* are the same; and that our little world is as much the object of His Almighty care, and the subject of His unerring justice, as central heaven itself. "His *tender* mercies are over *all* His works" (Psalm cxlv. 9).

What answer is it then to tell us that in view of the good and glory of the universe and Himself, "God *did not choose* to prevent sin" by forbearing to create immortal beings, who would immediately and certainly fall, albeit by their own fault, into an "infinite punishment, an eternity of torments" (Ib. p. 296), without hope of release? This is the very answer which Dr. Bledsoe's victims—the advocates of election *and reprobation*—are wont to make. If you ask of them how it can be right to elect a man from all eternity, for no evil he has ever done, to an infinite tor-

ment, they reply, because in the councils of God's wisdom *he chose to do so*, for his glory; and if you suggest that no wisdom or glory could justify such an act, they flash upon you the lightning of the demand—"Who art *thou* that re-
 pliest against God?" It seems strange that Dr. Bledsoe should use a weapon in defence of his position, which his terrible blows have shown to be so weak in the hands of his adversary. We therefore venture to say on his own authority, which we estimate very highly, that it is a vain reply. It does not exclude us from enquiring into the justice and holiness of a choice, ascribed by him to the Almighty, without, as we think, any good reason for it. We are constrained to think that if his great intellect had here thrown off, as it has so often done, the trammels of a traditional creed, he would never have been found justifying the creation of one sure to fall, even by his own will, into undying pangs, for the sake of any "glory of the universe." No! a thousand times, no! that glory could only be marred and stained all over by such an election. It can have no harmony if the infinite and unending wailings of anguish and despair are necessarily to be mingled forever with its otherwise grand and glorious tones. Punishment there must be, sufferings are inevitable—punishment and sufferings bitter and sorrowful, and well-deserved, will be the result of man's own sinful rebellion against the authority of God's law. They are inevitable, because God cannot coerce the unruly wills of sinful men into love for Him, so long as they *are* men, without a violation of their natures and his own. But justice requires only that they shall be reformatory punishments. The true end of punishment will be attained, so far as the sinner is concerned, if they shall at some future time produce reformation through the love of Christ,

God's law will thus be vindicated, and justice can ask no more.

The Scriptures tell us that there are degrees of guilt: that some shall be "beaten with many stripes," and some "with few stripes" (Luke xii, 47, 48). But this cannot be if both are unendingly beaten. If it be said that one will be beaten with lighter stripes than another, it does not respond to the text, and if it did, a lighter punishment, *if unending*, leaves us little to choose, between it and a heavier one, for the *duration* of it is the real pang in each case. If, however, the punishment be not a *hopeless* one, but only lasts till its true ends, the reformation of the sinner, and the moral discipline of the universe of intelligent creatures, is attained by the vindication of the law, then the text will be fully met and the "glory of God's universal and eternal empire" will be established on a sure foundation. The temporary discord will only enhance its ultimate peace, and no harsh note will mingle with the "*new song*" that shall be sung to the glory of Him through whose self-sacrifice the triumph will have been achieved. On this supposition justice and mercy could both applaud the creation of a moral agent, though God foresaw that he would fall into sin and sorrow; for He also foresaw that he would be redeemed from that fall stronger than when he fell. It would plainly appear to be just and merciful to create a being "necessary to the glory of the universe," who would inevitably fall, if he could and would be restored, because by restoration from that fall he would have attained a secure bliss and glory, impossible *for him* in any other way.

We conclude then that there is no warrant for saying that the "finally impenitent" (those who depart this life in their sins), "will never cease to sin and rebel against

the authority of God's law," but have thus made "sure of their eternal continuance in sinning"; and therefore unending punishment cannot be inferred from that principle or alleged fact. We have admitted that the *tendency* of sin is to self-propagation, and therefore it remains to be considered whether that tendency may be, and probably will be, or not, checked and overruled, till man is delivered from his sins. We see around us every day in the cases of the "chiefs of sinners" that it may be, and is, capable of being checked and reversed—and this might of itself be sufficient on the point—but our enquiry goes further, viz: whether it will be so *in every case*; whether, in spite of the nature of sin and the nature of man, the provision made for him may be sufficient for this end in all cases, and whether the Divine influences may be strong enough to induce the acceptance of it by all; whether sin and death will at last triumph over God's love and power *in any case*; or whether, on the contrary, He will triumph *in every case* over them. In short, whether He can and will repair the evil by which His perfect universe has been marred.

Now to say even of a man that he can make a cunning instrument or machine, but cannot repair any damage it may suffer; or, if it is irreparable, that he cannot destroy it utterly and make another like it, would be an absurdity. He, who can make, can repair or make anew. If then it be absurd to say such a thing of man, how much more absurd, nay how blasphemous, would it be to say such a thing of God! God can then repair the fall of man. Not only can He save *a few* of His poor miserable creatures, but He can erase from the tablets of eternity all the stains of time, and can make those very stains themselves cleansing and purifying. To do it, He need not coerce man's will or necessitate his holiness, but He need only use, as He is now

doing, and can still more effectually do hereafter, the abundant persuasive and alluring influences which are at His command, till *sooner* or *later*, either *here* or *hereafter*, according to the various natures of those to be influenced, the desired effect is produced. If this be so, the only question is, whether He is *willing* to do so. On this point we have assurances without number from His own infallible lips. One only need be cited at this stage of our enquiry. We read that the Lord is "long-suffering to us-ward not willing that *any* should perish, but that *all* should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii, 9). If it be true that he is not willing that *any* should perish, has He manifested that willingness by any provision capable of preventing us *all* from perishing? He has done so. He has set forth a remedy of so stupendous a character, of such a benign, ameliorating, redeeming efficacy, that "all creatures in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth," though they could only understand in part the depth of its profound and wondrous import, broke out spontaneously when they first heard it, in a resistless union of song and praise and rejoicing adoration (Rev. v, 13). Not only is He willing and able to save *all*, so that *not any* shall perish, and to set forth the means of doing it—His *Son*, who is His "*Word*"—but in Isaiah's prophetic declaration He assures us that He will succeed. Speaking of Christ and the success of His redemption, he says: "so shall My word be that goeth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it *shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*" (Isaiah lv, 11).

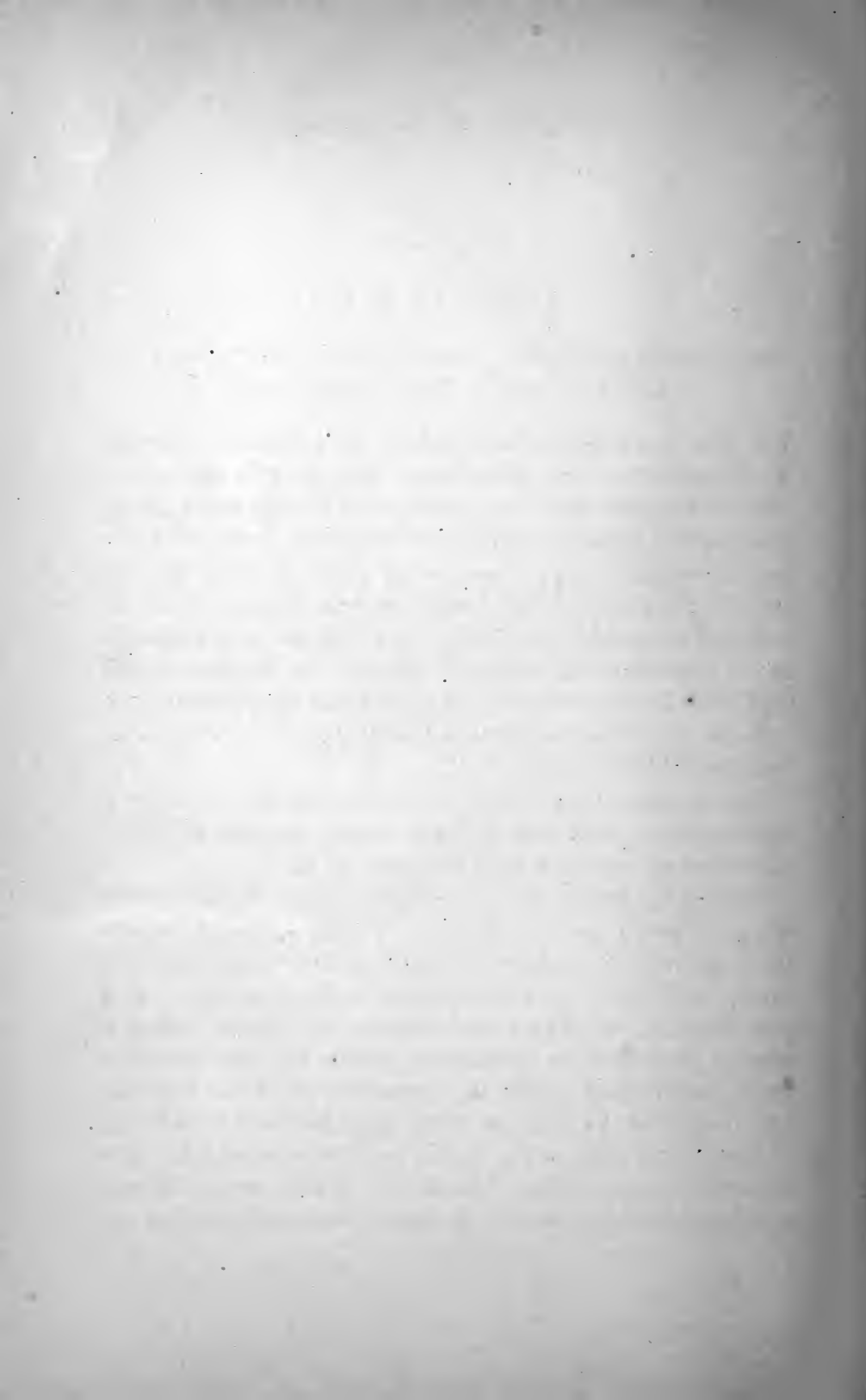
We reserve for a future chapter the display of the infinite moral miracles wrought by this provision (chap. iii, Part ii). We think it will then appear that it has removed forever the inherent impossibility of controlling, even by

Divine coercion, the unruly will of sinful man; that it has made that possible *through love*, which God *by power* could not do; that it has shown in the infinitely glorious light that surrounds the eternal throne, that *love is greater than power*; and that though man's will cannot be coerced, yet that an influence stronger than the determined will shall bring it, sooner or later, either in this world or the next, after needful suffering, into *willing* subjection. We will then endeavor also to show more particularly how the scheme here set forth is fortified by Scripture. For the present we only add that on this view the otherwise insoluble difficulty which has perplexed the ages is removed, and the existence of sin and evil becomes much more easy to reconcile on reason, with the wisdom and love of God. Given the doctrine, that the Divine punishments are reformatory, not vindictive, and the darkness is cleared up. Ignore this view, and in spite of faith, man's reason staggers and reels before the awful gloom.

The first part of the book is devoted to a general history of the United States from its discovery by Columbus in 1492 to the present day. It covers the early years of settlement, the struggle for independence, the formation of the Constitution, and the expansion of the country to the Pacific Ocean. The second part of the book is devoted to a detailed history of the United States from the beginning of the 19th century to the present day. It covers the years of the Republic, the Civil War, the Reconstruction, the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, and the New Deal. The third part of the book is devoted to a detailed history of the United States from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. It covers the years of the World Wars, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War. The fourth part of the book is devoted to a detailed history of the United States from the beginning of the 21st century to the present day. It covers the years of the 9/11 attacks, the Iraq War, and the 2008 financial crisis.

PART II.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL CAPABLE OF SOLUTION ON
THE BASIS OF A FUTURE PUNISHMENT, NOT HOPE-
LESS, BUT REFORMATORY.



CHAPTER I.

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW—AND HEREIN, OF THE “ANGER” OF GOD, HIS “WRATH,” HIS “VENGEANCE.”

IN this investigation we include in the term “sorrow” the effects of all those trials that crowd our mortal career—whether they be weaknesses of any kind, disappointments, losses, bereavements, slanders, treacheries, betrayals, temptations, or any other form of what we call evil. And we do this in accordance with that pathetic description of our Divine Master, by which He is presented to us as the “Man of Sorrows” (Isaiah liii, 3)—one, thank God, who has experienced all our trials and temptations, and can therefore be “touched with a feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. iv, 15).

Before proceeding however to consider the ministry of sorrow, let us endeavor, as preparatory thereto, to realize as well as we can how God feels toward us.

Almost all Scripture truth is conveyed to us in paradoxes, or seeming contradictions. This is probably because truth is rarely to be found in extreme statements, and can rarely be defined fully by a single term or phrase, but is the resultant of divers and diverse principles. Man is greatly benefited by a diligent search for this resultant among adverse or conflicting statements, and the exercise and discipline he derives from that search is a part, and an important part, of the trying and proving which a probationary state implies. Especially is this true of all the attributes of Deity, which, in their direct conception or de-

inition, are incommunicable to the limited and incompetent mind of man. It has already been said that human language, through which the great body of truth is conveyed to us, is, like the human mind, imperfect and finite; and cannot be made even by Divine power the vehicle of infinite truth—for that this would be to work a contradiction, of which God is incapable. Such a work is not the subject of power, and if it were, it would be abhorrent to the God of truth.

But apparent contradictions—apparent, because they present the opposite sides of the same thing—are the only vehicles of that measure of infinite truth which is communicable to us. Almost all the strife of tongues among those who accept the same Scriptures as the Word of God, arises from an exclusive gaze by the one or the other upon *one* of the manifold sides of truth, which prevents him from drawing this resultant, and thus seeing the whole truth. What but this causes the unending logomachy between those who assert man's free agency without due regard to the Divine Sovereignty; and those who assert the Divine Sovereignty without due regard to man's free agency—between those who exalt faith at the expense of works, and those who applaud works at the expense of faith?

We have many examples in Scripture of the *apparent* contradiction above referred to; both in single texts, and in groups of texts. Dr. Bledsoe expounds for us a text of the first class, in harmony with his demonstration of the freedom of the will (Theodicy p. 175, and elsewhere), and proves that except on that demonstration, its apparent contradiction cannot be explained—"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, *for* it is God that worketh in you *to will* and *to do* of His good pleasure"—or because

of his favor towards you—(Phil. ii, 12, 13). It is surely, at first sight, a strange reason that is assigned for our painful efforts, that God may and does accomplish the end for us. But when, by the light of the torch held up for us, we learn that God works alone in the two passive faculties of the mind, viz: the “intelligence” and the “sensitivity” (Theodicy p. 132)—or the apprehension and the desire—while man works in the *will*, then there is beautiful harmony, instead of contradiction in the text. Of the other class—groups of texts apparently in conflict with each other—there are many examples in the Scripture.

Take one class. In Mal. iii, 6, it is said, “I am the Lord, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” In Heb. xiii, 8, Paul, speaking of our Lord in his Divine character, says of Him: “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever.” And yet, in Genesis vi, 6, it is said of the unchangeable and unerring God, “it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and *it grieved Him at His heart.*” Again, many texts tell us of the terrible anger of the Lord, of His being angry with the wicked every day, of His fierce wrath, of His burning vengeance. It is spoken of as a consuming fire, as abiding on the sinner. His vengeance is said to be poured out upon them; and after every figure is exhausted, the question is asked—“Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?” On the other hand, we are assured that His wrath endureth but a moment; that He is long-suffering, of tender pity and compassion, and will not keep His anger forever; that He knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are but dust; that He will not “contend forever,” neither be “always wroth,” for that if He should do so, the “spirit should fail” before Him and “the souls which He had made” would cease to be. Therefore

He urges contrition, and promises to abide with the humble to revive them. He assures us that He is the Father of all, even though as miserable sinners we have ruined ourselves; and that so pitifully does He regard us, even while we are rebelling against Him, and pouring contempt on all His love, that He provides for us, even in anticipation, by the sacrifice of Christ; and is not willing that *any* of us should perish, but that *all* of us should come to Him and be saved.

Now all these last mentioned things are utterly inconsistent with any idea of *anger, wrath, vengeance*, in the ordinary sense, towards His miserable creatures. So that we may feel sure that such terms do not represent, in that ordinary sense, the Divine feelings, but are an accommodation to the human mode of viewing things—an attempt to convey *measurably* to our minds an idea of the Divine emotions which are incommunicable to us in their real condition. It is as if God said to us—“you cannot understand Me, ‘for My thoughts are not as your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways’” (Isaiah lv, 8), but I intend by these words to convey to you some notion of My horror of sin; and in order that I may do so in such a way that you can faintly understand it, I say to you that if I were a man I should be fiercely angry with him that committed it, should hate him, should burn with wrath against him, and should wreak my vengeance on him. In illustration of this interpretation, let us take the cases of Pharoah and the Jews. In Exodus iv, 21, it is said: “And the Lord said unto Moses, when thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou doest all these wonders before Pharoah which I have put in thy hand: but I will harden his heart that he shall not let the people go.” It is afterwards stated that He *did* harden his heart. In Isaiah

vi, 10, God is represented as saying to His prophet of the Jews, "make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart and convert and be healed." (See also xii, 40.) Here and in texts like these, God is represented as hardening the hearts of Pharoah and the Jews, that the one might incur fuller vengeance, and that the others might not repent and return to him. Now, if these various classes of texts are to be interpreted literally in their apparent sense, and not in the sense we have given, then how repulsive is the picture presented to us! God, deliberately resolving in the councils of eternity, on the creation of man, gathering together the angels and arch-angels, and all the glorious hosts of Heaven to witness the stupendous act—one thrilling with joy and praise all the animate and inanimate universe—and then, not long after, repenting that He had done it; grieving *at His heart* for the fatal act; burning with such rage against His erring creature, that in order that His vengeance against him might be the more complete, He actually blinds him and hardens him into deadlier sin. How our very souls revolt against such a hideous caricature of the Divine character as is presented by a literal interpretation of such words and texts! We know in our inmost souls that our Father in Heaven is incapable of vacillation, of anger, of wrath, of vengeance in any such sense. Though all the angels and arch-angels in heaven should appear and tell us He is such an one, we would hold them in derision. We would only conclude that instead of angels of light, these lying spirits were in truth demons "come hot from hell," who had put on the livery of heaven to deceive us. It is the literal interpretation of such texts that points the blasphemy of the atheist, pro-

vokes the indifference of the worldly, and sorely tries the faith of the humble and sincere, but ignorant Christian. A true understanding of God's relations to us, as far as our feeble faculties will permit, will reveal Him to us as hating the sin, but loving and pitying and yearning over the sinner. St. Paul says "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against (what? Ungodly men? No; but) *all ungodliness and unrighteousness* of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. i, 18); but nevertheless His hand is stretched out to these unrighteous and ungodly men, every day of their lives beckoning and alluring them to return to Him. Oh, unrighteous man, "Return unto the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity" (Hos. xiv, 1). Oh, sinner, "thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thy help" (Ib. xiii, 9). "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isaiah xlv, 22). "Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well" (Ib. i, 16, 17). If ye will do this, then "like as a Father pityeth his children," so will I pity you, for I know your frame, I remember that you are dust (Ps. ciii, 13, 14). "Come now, let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah i, 18); yea, "as far as the east is from the west," so far will I remove your transgressions from you (Ps. ciii, 12). "I will come unto you" and "make my abode" with you (John xiv, 23), and "I will be your God, and ye shall be My people" (Jer. vii, 22). Thus tenderly does God feel towards the vilest sinners that we can imagine; and therefore, whatever the "anger," the "wrath," the "vengeance" of God may be, these words are not to be taken literally, as if they were like similar emo-

tions in man, for they are not inconsistent with *the contemporaneous existence in the Divine bosom of exquisite love and tenderness for the worst offenders.*

We may now see how false is that vague idea—so common, and yet so unworthy of the Divine character—that God hates the sinner, rather than the sin, and loves the righteous only. If so, which of us can He love? for “there is none righteous, no not one.” On the contrary, the only hope of our race is that He loves *us all*—the vilest sinner that can be conceived as well as the greatest saints—who are confessedly great sinners. As a resultant of all the texts in regard to the love of God, we may say that there is a difference in the Divine emotions excited by the two classes. Towards the latter He feels, for Christ’s sake, the love of approbation; towards the former He feels a love of pity and compassion. It is a glorious, an elevating and an inspiring truth, that illuminates the bright courts of Heaven, the dark valleys of earth, and even the gloomy portals of the grave, that God loves all His creatures—whether they be more or less, or not at all, worthy of it—with a yearning love, infinite and Divine, and that His love of approbation is ready for the vilest and most degraded the instant that he is ready to accept this “*gift of God,*” through Jesus Christ our Lord, his almoner.

We assume, then, as needing no further illustration, that such emotions as those of “anger,” “wrath,” “vengeance,” in the ordinary sense, do not abide in the bosom of our Father in heaven; and that such terms are merely designed to convey to us an idea of God’s horror and detestation of sin, as disturbing the harmony of His creation, and separating His creature from the “life of God”—his Creator.

We are now prepared intelligently to consider our subject, which we hope to display as a great mercy, demanding our gratitude to the giver of all good things.

How then does the Divine hatred of sin, combined with His love and pity for the sinner, manifest itself in action? Chiefly by that wonderful mystery of the sacrifice of Christ for the accomplishment of our restoration from sin. Here omnipotent power and ineffable love appear in an intense activity, wholly Divine. But they also manifest themselves in action in subordinate modes. It is these subordinate modes that constitute what we call "the ministry of sorrow."

The necessity of this ministry grows out of the nature of our brief life, and its object—in its nature probational, in its object preparatory for a higher and more permanent existence. The Scriptures describe both the one and the other in countless texts. Our life is declared to be as grass, as the flower of the field, as a vapor, as a shadow, as a dream, as a handbreadth, as a swift boat or ship passing by, as a shepherd's tent to be struck soon, as a weaver's shuttle, as a pilgrimage in which we have no continuing city, as a school in which we are to be educated. The object of that life is declared to be that we may know God, and love and obey Him, that we may be accepted by Him, not only here where we are "pilgrims and strangers" (John xvii, 16), but in that "continuing city" which we seek, and which is "to come," at the end of our pilgrimage (Heb. xiii, 14). During that pilgrimage we are as children—not only as children, but *really* children—at school; where we have a diligent, faithful, and, if necessary, a severe school-master called "the Law of God," who by instruction, by penalties, by sorrows and by afflictions, is to bring us to Christ (Gal. iii, 25). He is to fit us to occupy, through grace, one of those "many mansions" (John xiv, 2) in that heavenly city, that "building of God," that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. v, 1), where we shall no longer need a school-master, but shall be perfect men in Christ (Col. i, 28).

We cannot too often impress on our minds the fact that this life, this probation, this pilgrimage or whatever else we may call it, is really and literally a school—a traveling school like those of the scientists who take their pupils through our western wilderness to teach them natural history practically, as well as theoretically. Its whole object is educational—to prepare us for a higher order of life—and compared with that object, our experiences of pleasure or pain by the way, sink into utter insignificance, except as they advance or retard it. But what a school! what an infinite variety of tempers and dispositions and aspirations in its scholars! This infinite variety proves it to be God's school.

God then is our school-master, and he teaches us not like a salaried teacher, however kind and faithful he may be; but as a tender father who instructs his children from the love of them; and who administers needful discipline not the less strictly, but the more so because of that very love—"For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii, 6). And He loves *us all*, so that in chastening us, He deals with all of us "as with sons, for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not? But if we be without chastening, whereof all are partakers, then are we bastards and not sons" (Ib. 7, 8).

Now the great impediment with us all in the way of our education for a higher state of existence is, that we want to build our "continuing city" here. The visible and tangible things around us seem to us more real than the objects and employments of that "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Like children of smaller growth, we find it hard to realize that the future is more important than the present, and that the present is always best employed in preparing for the future. But we *must* learn this

lesson before we can fulfill the end of our existence, and our kind Father, if He finds us set in this way, will so deal with us as to persuade us to look for that which is "to come." He permits us indeed to build our houses and cities here, but they must not be "continuing" ones—they must only be tabernacles—and then we may enjoy them for a shorter or longer period, or during all our pupilage, as may be best for us, provided they are built as types of the heavenly buildings, and have some resemblance to the house and city "not made with hands." But if they have not that resemblance, they must come down, however much it may grieve us; for it is better for us to suffer a brief sorrow, than to endure a longer woe, before the lesson is learned.

And what houses we do build!

One builds for himself and family, along the pilgrim path, a tabernacle on the pattern of the heavenly home, and there long enjoys the highest happiness his pilgrim state admits. But gradually idols appear in every apartment of this tabernacle; and, strange to tell, the pilgrims do not recognize their presence—for do they not daily fall down before the Father of all and acknowledge Him alone to be their Father and their God? But, alas! self-deceivers as we are—the wife and children have become idols to the father, the husband and children have become idols to the wife, and father and mother, or brothers or sisters have become idols to the children—and they know it not!

Another builds for his household a similar tabernacle. He models it on the house not made with hands. He carefully frames it as a type, a memorial of the heavenly home; and sweet flowers spring up around it, of joy, and peace, and resignation to the Father's will, even though He should remove this sweet tabernacle, and send them again to a

tent by the wayside. Their peace and joy are great—too great, for alas! they soon become “exalted above measure,” and before they know it, the type has become more engaging than the thing typified; the shadow has usurped the place of the substance; they have forgotten that they are pilgrims, and have lived as though they were in a “continuing city.” The whole tabernacle has become an idol, and perchance they know it not.

Another bethinks him, “I too will build a tabernacle along the pilgrim path; but my tabernacle shall surpass all others. It shall be crowned with a pillar of fame, in law, in medicine, in literature, in science, in art, or in politics; so that my brother pilgrims, as they stream along, shall pause awhile and admire it. They shall say ‘behold how this tabernacle dwarfs all others,’ and they shall long talk of its glory—yea, and ages after my pilgrimage is over, they shall pause—for it shall remain—and my name shall be linked with it. It shall indeed be built on the pattern of the heavenly building; but I will decorate it with grand legends of great deeds. I will hang banners from every point, and it shall stand as a house of glory to my Father’s name—and *to mine*. He will be honored in it, for it will give me great influence over my brother pilgrims; and I will exert that influence for their good, and His glory, and doing this I may rightly reap *great glory for myself*.” But when this tabernacle of fame is completed, or in a fair way to be completed—spreading out its wings and courts on every side—it has become in truth a strong tower instead of a tabernacle, and the poor pilgrim thinks it is a “continuing city,” and forgets that he is looking for a city “to come.”

Another thinks to build a tabernacle which shall shine, like a palace, with gems of gold and precious stones. He

secures from his fellow pilgrims all that he can get, by whatever lawful means, whether of gold, or silver, or diamonds, or pearls, or even inferior things. Wealth is a great blessing, he thinks, if it is properly used; and he will use it properly, not merely for himself, but for the benefit of his fellow pilgrims. He will instruct the ignorant, he will shelter the weary and storm-beaten, he will clothe the naked, feed the hungry, comfort the desolate, heal the wounded, bind up the broken-hearted, pour in the oil of joy for mourning, and bestow the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness. His tabernacle shall be a resting-place and a home for all who need, for the Father's sake—and though he means to enjoy it himself, yet his chief joy will be that he is acting as a steward, an almoner of the bounties of the common Father, towards all his needy children on their weary pilgrimage. He resolves that his tabernacle shall be pre-eminently useful and beautiful, if he can make it so. And so he builds. But his plans grow as he proceeds. The building is never complete—room is added to room, hall to hall. His abundant gold and silver is always expended as fast as received in additions and improvements. His precious stones are all consumed as fast as they are gathered, in filling up on mosaic tablets—in letters of diamonds and pearls and rubies and agates, and many others—texts and holy legends from the pilgrim's roll, descriptive of the duty and the glory of his benevolent plans. So, when the weary, the poor, the friendless and suffering pilgrims who are passing by call in for relief, allured by the invitation on these tablets, there is no shelter, for the whole house is filled with the debris of the building; there is no gold with which their wants could be supplied elsewhere, for it is all needed to complete the tabernacle. They must pass on

with kind promises to be fulfilled at a "convenient season," or "when all things are ready." In process of time the building, though incomplete—for it will never be finished—blazes with such beauty, allures with such irresistible fascinations, that the pilgrim is bewildered by it. By reason of the "deceitfulness of riches" (Matt. xiii, 22) he is so blinded as to think this gaudy tabernacle more beautiful and more desirable than any building can be that is yet "to come." And so he dreads the idea of resuming his pilgrimage, and shrinks from what he considers worse than death—a parting from his earthly tabernacle, in order to reach the "continuing city."

Other pilgrims—generally of the younger sort—reason with themselves that the Father did not mean their pilgrimage to be dull and dreary; that He intended them to enjoy all lawful pleasures, and to be as happy as they can be on such a journey. And they reason well, for surely they correctly state His gracious will. And so they combine, and build a fairy tabernacle. They cement its walls with bouyant and vigorous health. They adorn it with airy pillars, and arches, and verandahs, and balconies. They decorate it with the buds and blossoms of spring, with wreaths of flowers and wild grasses, and autumn leaves, and ivy, and mistletoe. They surround it with an atmosphere of illusions, which echoes also with songs and dances, and rippling laughter, and merry jests, and graceful movements—and they call it the "temple of innocent pleasures." But they forget that moderation—the most difficult thing for the young—must be the hand-maid of pleasure; that the admissible pleasures are only the pleasures of the way-side, or those to be found in tabernacles that consist with pilgrimage; and that even the joys that these afford cease to be innocent when they become excessive.

They forget that permanent tabernacles of pleasure are unlawful, since they make their occupants reluctant to turn towards the pilgrim path, and hide from their eyes the end of their pilgrimage, and the building "to come." And so, in the mad dance of pleasures no longer innocent, they find their "continuing city"—their paradise—at least they seek no other.

But time would fail to tell of all the different kinds of tabernacles, towers, palaces, pleasure houses, chapels of ease, gardens of delight, mountains of strength, and the many other varieties of buildings that these pilgrim scholars erect—all interfering more or less with the object of their journey. We have given, by way of example, a few of the better sort. All these and many other kinds are built also by others, who commence, not with the good purposes of those above mentioned, and who forget more or less in building the pilgrimage, its end, and the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Others still there are, who not only forget as do these last, but who—each one of them—chooses to build his "continuing city" here, and who so builds as to obstruct and even to ensnare others.

Now, our kind and tender Father, our wise school-master, sees and hears all this. He sees that His scholars are not learning the needful lessons He has prescribed, and He "visits" them for these things (Jer. v, 9), wielding the penalties of the broken law. At His approach the idols in the tabernacle fall down shattered; the tabernacles that were themselves idols crumble; the pillars of fame either topple over with a tremendous crash, or stand revealed in new characters as pillars of reproach or infamy; the tapestries and gold and precious stones of the palaces of wealth are consumed by moth and rust, or dissolved by

self-developed fires, and the palaces themselves become shapeless and blackened ruins; the airy temples of pleasure lose the cement of their walls, and tumble into hideous wrecks, or else flee away like visions, leaving behind only the ashes of departed joys; the chapels of ease are crushed; the gardens of delight are withered; the mountains of strength are thrown down.

Or, if any of these remain as before, it is only because the lesson designed to be taught may be better impressed on some by permitting them to stand and prove their utter hollowness, even when fully tested. We have an illustration of the last case in the instance of a pilgrim mentioned by Gibbon, the historian, of the "decline and fall" of a city sometimes called "eternal." He says "our imagination is dazzled by the splendid" magnificence of Abdalrahman, one of the Saracen monarchs in Spain. He spent on his palace and gardens of Zehra, near Cordova, constructed "in honor of his favorite Sultana," fifteen millions of money and "twenty-five years" of time. The buildings were "sustained and adorned by twelve hundred columns of marble" from Spain, Africa, Greece and Italy. The audience hall was "incrusted with pearls and gold." The whole was designed and decorated by the "artists of Constantinople, the most skillful architects and sculptors of the age." His body-guard was composed of "twelve thousand horse, whose belts and scimitars were studded with gold." The following testimony was left by this princely pilgrim at his departure: "I have now reigned about fifty years in victory or in peace; beloved by my subjects, dreaded by my enemies, and respected by my allies. Riches and honors, power and pleasure have waited on my call, nor does any earthly pleasure seem to have been wanting to my felicity. In this situation I have diligently numbered the days of pure and genuine happiness

which have fallen to my lot. *They amount to fourteen.* Oh, man, place not thy confidence in this present world!"

Take a second case—that of a nobler pilgrim, a great and successful statesman and author. In the preface to M. Guizot's book, "*Christianity viewed in relation to the present state of society and opinion,*" he says: "In the course of my long life I have seen much and done somewhat. I have taken part in the world's affairs. I have quitted it, and am no longer anything more than a spectator. For twenty years I have been essaying my tomb. I have gone down into it living, and have made no effort to issue forth again. Not only have I experience of the world, but nothing attaches me to it. Could I still be of any service to the two great causes, in my eyes but one—the cause of Christian faith in men's souls and the cause of political liberty in my country, I should await with thankfulness in the bosom of my seclusion the dawn of that eternal day which 'fools call death,' says Petrarch."

That sweet poet of the South, the late John R. Thompson, translated the touching poem "Carcassonne" from the French of Gustave Nadaud. It tells of an old man who had lived all his life within three leagues of the beautiful, and to him wonderful, city of Carcassonne. His highest earthly ambition was to visit this city. The hope of doing so some happy day beguiled the tedium of his monotonous and life-long labors; but his simple hopes were ever disappointed by the exactions of poverty and the necessity of daily toil for daily necessities. At last, in old age, he was invited by a stranger to go with him on this journey, the object of his life-long wishes. Next day they started—

"But * * * * half way on
The old man died upon the road:
He never gazed on Carcassonne.
Each mortal has Carcassonne!"

So, in one way or another, whether by loss and bereavement, by disappointment in possession, or by vain hopes of possession, the discipline is the same.

And then there is sorrow along the pilgrim path—the mourning of bereaved husbands and fathers—the wails of widows and children—the tears of faded hopes—the silent misery of disappointment—and the rebellious though impotent cries of rage and despair. All these discordant sounds proclaim to those who interpret them rightly that our tender Father in Heaven, our gracious and wise Schoolmaster, is rebuking us, His children; is disciplining us, his scholars, just in the same way (but with infinitely more of wisdom and love) that our earthly fathers act. They proclaim that He who “is love” is exhibiting that love even to the worst of us. They proclaim that the giver of all good things has brought to us a precious gift—the “ministry of sorrow.” He designs that ministry to reprove, exhort, reform and bless us; to bring us back from our heedless and wayward thoughtlessness and forgetfulness; to start us anew on our pilgrim way, with knowledge based on experience now, that here we “have no continuing city, but seek one to come.”

But suppose all these means fail to teach the needful lesson during this whole pilgrimage; suppose the scholars will not learn what their Father would have them learn, what will that wise and loving Father do then?

Now the advocates of the traditional dogma—those who hold that there is only one pilgrimage or probation—cannot answer this question consistently with the holiness of God. On their theory these sorrows are evil and only evil to all those who are not reformed by them, for they are only a foretaste of exquisite and hopeless pangs for the great majority. The existence of evil in the world is with

them an awful mystery—a contradiction of the love and power of God, the solution of which they do not attempt, because from their stand-point it is insoluble; and which they remit to a vague faith, that what they do not now understand to be just will be shown to be so hereafter.

On our theory these evils are shown to be good and only good to all; for they are brought by God out of sin, the only real evil in the world (and one which God could not prevent without a violation of man's nature or His own) for the beneficent end of ultimate restoration.

The figure most often employed in the pilgrim's roll, to instruct us of the Divine Father's mind towards us, is that of earthly parentage. It is the chosen type—chosen by the Divine Father Himself—as most fitting to inform us of His feelings and purposes towards us. If an earthly father, though himself evil, shall yet through love do so and so for his children, in the midst of their negligence, their obstinacy, and even their rebellion, then “how much more shall your Father which is in heaven” do so? (Matt. vii, 11). Let us take then this golden thread of truth, and like him who explored the labyrinth of old, follow the clew through all doubts and difficulties.

Now what would an earthly father—such an one as we call good and wise—do with a son at school who neglected his studies or despised learning, or resisted the authority of his teacher? There can be but one answer to such a question. He would bear with him, and exhort and persuade and allure him to a better way, as long as forbearance presented any hope of his reformation. If he found that his goodness did not lead him to repentance (Rom. ii, 4), then he would resort to sterner measures, not from a feeling of vengeance, but of love, and for the good of his child. He would now subject him to all the discipline *admissible* in *that* school.

But suppose he still remains incorrigible through it all—will he then cast him off and turn his back on him forever? Oh! no, no, even human love can stand such a test as that. Even human love will yearn with parental steadfastness over the son of its loins. It will abate no jot of heart or hope. This wise, loving father will make another and another effort for the welfare of his erring boy. He will place him in *another* school, where there is severer discipline, and exhaust there all the means which “goodness and severity” (Rom. xi, 22) can employ for his reformation.

If he yet fails to bring him to himself, and to induce him to exert his powers in those studies which may fit him to fill an elevated sphere in life, does he then abandon him? No good or wise earthly father *could* do so. No, if he cannot induce him to fit himself for a high rank in his future life, he will do for him the best that remains for him to do—he will endeavor, at least, to fit him for usefulness in a lower sphere. He will subject him to still greater discipline. He will apprentice him to a taskmaster, where work must be done, or still greater severity must be employed. He will put him at the work-bench, at the bellows, at the anvil.

But if at last this fails; if the boy is utterly incorrigible; if he deserts the post to which he has been assigned; if now looking on the needful discipline to which his father has subjected him as unkind and unjust, he resigns himself to his own devices, mocks at his father, and despising him and his counsels, abandons his home and flies to some distant point, where, without restraint, he can revel in iniquity and shame,—if he does all this and much more, does that father desert him at last? God forbid! That wretched but still loved child oppresses his thoughts

by day and by night. All human means being exhausted, he throws himself on the Divine aid entirely. He bears that wanderer on his groans and prayers up to Him who is able to help. As long as life lasts, God shall hear of him ceaselessly, from lips that plead his cause, and beseech that the rod may not fall on him to condemn and destroy, but to arrest and amend him. That father will never give up that boy, though all hell should gape for him. Against "principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places" (Eph. vi, 12), he will oppose in that dear, ruined boy's behalf the seven-fold shield of prayer, all radiant with undying hope in God.

In what we have set down as to the feelings and conduct of a wise and good earthly father, we are sure nothing has been overstated. That conduct, as above set forth, commends itself to our sense of love and mercy and justice; and in it we have, on the infallible word of our Divine Father himself, an exact example in kind, though infinitely lower in degree, of his feelings and conduct towards the worst, the most obstinate and the most rebellious of us all. If the earthly father does habitually give to his erring and ungrateful children these good gifts of love and forbearance and fidelity to the end; if he never abandons the lost child while life endures, "*how much more*" shall our "Father which is in heaven" give the good gift of His "Holy Spirit to them that ask Him" (Luke xi, 13), even to the end of life, whether here or hereafter? The earthly father's life is limited, but his love pervades the whole of it. The heavenly Father's life is infinite; but He makes the earthly and finite life of the earthly father the type of His eternal relation toward us; and His love to us pervades His eternal life just as the earthly love pervades the earthly life—only "*how much more!*" If God's relation to us be in truth that

of a father, we may rest assured that He will never abandon us utterly. It would be monstrous to suppose that while human love endures many probational trials of the erring child, and never surrenders him, God's patience should be exhausted by one brief probation. Oh no! if one of God's children continues to resist His instructions to the end of this brief probation, another and severer one awaits him; but *God will never give him up finally*: "for the Lord will not cast off forever: but though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies. For He doth not afflict willingly (in the Hebrew 'from His heart'), nor grieve the children of men" (Lam. iii, 31, 33). "Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the Lord. * * * I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee *in measure*; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished" (Jer. xlvi, 28). These declarations were made to a people who had defied God grossly, and by the mouth of the very prophet who was sent to tell of their terrible overthrow as a people. God will not desert them finally for the sake of Abraham, whose seed they were after the flesh; nor will he finally desert us, for the sake of Christ, who took upon Him our flesh, that He might save us miserable sinners.

We are warranted by this glorious type of the fatherhood of God, in the belief that the infinite resources of redeeming love will operate upon his erring children till reformation is attained, either here or hereafter, whatever sorrowful experiences must first be endured. They will indeed be bitter, but they will be blessed; for oh! benign "ministry of sorrow," thou art the hand-maid of eternal parental love. Thou art a merciful gift from God our Father. Thy robes indeed are stained with blood, but it is redeeming blood—for even the "son of man" was made "perfect through sufferings" (Heb. ii, 10).

CHAPTER II.

THE MINISTRY OF SORROW—CONTINUED—AND; HEREIN, OF INEQUALITIES OF FORTUNE, OF SPIRITUAL OPPORTUNITIES, AND OF SPIRITUAL SUSCEPTIBILITIES.

HAVING now considered the general character of the Divine discipline, let us descend into particulars.

In that wonderful book of Job we have a detailed example of God's dealings with the individual sinner, such as is nowhere else to be found in Scripture, although in entire harmony with what we elsewhere read therein. Ordinarily we are only permitted to see the execution of God's work; but here the veil hanging between us and the unseen world is lifted sufficiently to enable us to see in detail the planning of it in a particular instance. The great worker Himself vouchsafes that we may see not only His completed work, but *Himself at work upon it*.

It appears that there was a day when the "sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord," and that Satan "came also among them" (Job i, 6). It seems strange to us that Satan should have been "among them." Theologians have thought, indeed, that Satan had free access to the heavenly places, till after the manifestation (or the temptation) of our Lord; but that then took place that "war in heaven," in which "Michael and his angels fought against the dragon (or the Devil), and the dragon fought and his angels, but prevailed not" (Rev. xii, 7); and that since that time neither he nor his angels have had such access—for it is added in the eighth verse, "neither was

their place found any more in heaven.” They may be right as to their theory and their dates, but whether so or not it is not material to our investigation to enquire; nor to enquire whether the book of Job is a record of events which actually occurred, or an allegory. In either case the teaching is the same.

When Satan thus appeared before God, he drew from him a statement that he had been diligent in his business; he had been “going to and fro in the earth,” and “walking up and down in it” (Ib. i, 7)—not idly we may be sure; and God, assuming that he had been engaged in his fell work, asks him “hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil?” (Ib. 8). Job was perfect, not in an absolute, but in a relative sense; that is, he was perfect in external conduct, and in spiritual excellence *so far as Satan could see*. That the word is used in this sense appears by the sequel. Now, doubtless Satan had expended on Job all his efforts, and he seems to have despaired of getting him into his power, for he does not deny the statement of Job’s perfection. His subtlety was great, but he was not omniscient, and therefore he could not see, as God did, the real weakness and imperfection that lay hidden down in the bottom of Job’s heart—hidden from himself as well as Satan. Job’s sin was one very common with those who “fear God and eschew evil”—*self-righteousness*—and it is the nature of that sin that we who commit it are deceived by it, so that we are unconscious of it.

But Satan made the mistake of supposing that Job’s righteousness was only the complacency of him whose every want had been supplied. In answer therefore to what he supposed a taunt from God, as if belittling his

power, he charges that Job's invulnerability was due not to his lack of skill, but to the fact that God had so hedged him about as to prevent access to him; and he declares that if God will remove this hedge, so that he may strike down Job's prosperity and destroy all his earthly interests, he will curse God to his face. The permission was given, and crash after crash fell on Job's earthly life, removing houses, flocks, herds, wealth and children, till nothing remained of his fair possessions but utter wrecks and blasted prospects, of which an unworthy wife, who in her rage advised him to "curse God and die," was the fitting complement. But grand old Job stood sublimely erect amidst the ruins, and poured into the ear that is ever open to the cries of distress, that triumphant *miserere* which with pathetic melody has soothed and comforted humbled and sorrowing hearts through all the centuries since its utterance: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Ib. 21). Baffled and rebuked, the tempter left him.

Again there was a day when the sons of God presented themselves to the Lord, and again Satan was among them. Sore at his last defeat, he makes no allusion to it when again asked about Job's perfection, but abruptly says, "skin for skin; yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life (or his person); put forth thine hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face" (Ib. ii, 4, 5). He is conscious of his former mistake and now searches Job more deeply. Surely he thinks he will not endure all things—his love of God cannot be so unselfish, so sublime as to endure the worst that may befall him. Full liberty is given him to do with Job as he pleases, so that he spare his life. He loses not a moment's

time; he is impatient for Job's ruin and his own revenge. He "went forth from the presence of the Lord," and smote Job with such sore bodily disease and suffering, that he could find no better mitigation of his pain than to sit in ashes. He was so changed in appearance that three out of the four who, alone of all his former friends, visited him, did not know him till they came near to him; and then, softened by pity, they wept for him (Ib. 12). His "brethren," his "kinsfolk," most of his "familiar friends," his "acquaintance," his "maids" and "servants," and his unworthy wife, deserted one who had lost his wealth and presented a disgusting appearance (Ib. xix, 13-17). He was utterly desolate. Satan had shot his last terrible shaft, and it had found Job's heart. His integrity to God trembled in the balance, but though he held that firm, and so disappointed and humiliated Satan again, yet he fell in another way. Satan's arrow searched in Job's heart in vain for rebellion against God, but found a congenial resting place in his self-righteousness; and there it rankled till Job's eyes were opened.

We read that Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, three of the four friends who still adhered to him, charged him over and over again with self-righteousness. Though God afterwards rebuked them, because, said He, "ye have not spoken of *Me*, the thing that is right" (Ib. xlii, 7); yet their charge against Job was true; for after they had ceased to answer him, "because he was righteous in his own eyes" (Ib. xxxii, 1), Elihu, his fourth friend, whose counsel God seems to have approved, charges him with justifying "himself rather than God" (Ib. 2), and with saying, "I am clean, without transgression, I am innocent; neither is there iniquity in me" (Ib. xxxiii, 9); "I am righteous, and God hath taken away my judgment" (Ib.

xxxiv, 5). Under Elihu's rebuke Job was dumb. We are aware that many critics regard Elihu's part in this narrative as an interpolation by a later hand. We need not enter into this controversy. Whether it be so or not, Job's assertion of his righteousness and his questioning of God for rewarding it with affliction is indisputable. God Himself afterwards charges him with it. Howbeit, Job now, for the first time, begins to see his error. He gradually sees that all this time, down in his heart of hearts, he has been pluming himself on his excellence; that he has been so possessed of the idea that his prosperity was a reward for his righteousness, instead of a free and unmerited gift of God, that he has been actually unconscious of its falsehood and grossness. Ah! how some of us should know the feeling! If we are greatly prosperous; if we have made some attainments in the gifts of grace, in the love of God, how we begin to plume ourselves! to fancy that we are favorites of heaven because we are so good—in fact, so much better than others. And then we need the rod; then we may look out for a fall; then Satan will be sure to trip us. Even St. Paul was in danger of being "exalted beyond measure" by peculiar privileges, and like Job, had to have a "thorn in his flesh," to keep him mindful of his nothingness in the comparison with God (2 Cor. xii, 7).

And so Job was now thoroughly humbled, and then the time of mercy had come for him. Then God, who "forgetteth not the cry of the humble" (Ps. ix, 12), and who loves and dwells with him that is of an humble and contrite spirit" (Isaiah lvii, 15), made manifest to him His gracious presence. He shows him his utter weakness and the folly of his past opinions in such plain terms, as to impress the lesson on him forever afterwards—"Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without wisdom? Gird

up now thy loins like a man, and answer thou me. Where wast *thou* when *I* laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job xxxviii, 2, 4). "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty, instruct him? He that reproveth God let him answer it. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn *Me* that *thou* mayest be righteous?" (Ib. xl, 8).

At last Job is free from his secret sin. He has seen it, repented of it and now confesses it. "Out of weakness, now made strong" (Heb. xi, 34), he acknowledges that he had uttered things that he understood not, but rejoices that he has also learned truths about himself and God, which he never knew before. And then, grand in humility and faith, he pours out his heart before Him—"I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii, 5, 6).

Let us endeavor to draw from this wonderful narrative the lessons taught by it.

First. We see that God works, not only in directing the affairs of nations, of the world or of the universe; but that He works personally and as grandly *in the affairs of individuals*—just as nature discloses as wonderful and as perfect a work on infinitesimal things, as upon things of inconceivable magnitudes.

Second. We see also, that though God generally works by law, yet that He does not merely set in motion the gigantic machinery of an inflexible law, to work out its inexorable results; but that He intervenes and satisfies the law by new conditions. In human jurisprudence this adaptation of law to new conditions is called *equity*. So we may say that God's decisions and acts are not limited by the rigid conditions of law alone; but by the principles of equity, which, though it "follows the law," yet does that which law can-

not do. The law had condemned Job for a sin indulged until he became unconscious of it. His condition, therefore, was hopeless. But God specially intervenes. He opens Job's eyes by afflictions; and then his repentance disarms the law, or rather through grace fulfills it. It was equitable that an unconscious sin should be made conscious, before the sword of the law should finally fall.

Third. We see that God does not thrust us out from His side, into the midst of hot temptations, with the stern command alone, "do this, and thou shalt live; do that, and thou shalt die." Oh no, our Father in Heaven does far more than this. He employs every agency in heaven and earth for our safety; and if we fall, He employs every agency in heaven, earth *and hell* for our reformation. He avails Himself in Job's case of Satan's malevolence to wrest him finally and forever from his power. And in what a wonderful way He does it! He actually goads Satan, not once, but twice, into a renewal of his temptations. Now this seems a very strange thing, for it appears at first sight that God wills that Job shall be tempted to evil. On the other hand, we read, "Let no man say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted of God:' for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither (so) tempteth he any man; but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts and enticed" (James i, 13, 14). Here seems to be another of those apparent conflicts, to which we have already referred. Let us endeavor to understand it. God indeed tempts no man to evil; but what *is* evil? *Sin; and sin alone, is evil.* All other such things as we call evil, are merely the consequences of sin; and are *in truth good things*, if by God's grace they arouse us from our sin. What then is sin? It is a condition of the heart. The outward act is not the sin, it is only the evidence of the sin. It is

often the shame of the outward act which stimulates us to eradicate the sin from the heart. Now, Job was in a state of sin, which was so deeply hidden down in his heart from himself and others, that, for want of provocation, it did not manifest itself by any outward act, and so he did not see it. But now God comes and stimulates Satan to tempt Job—in order to make him sin? God forbid that we should say so! no, but in order to develop in him an external manifestation of his inward sin, so that he might be convinced of it. Satan aimed to do something else, viz: to make Job curse God, and failed; but he did succeed in making Job do that which, putting the effect for the cause, we call sin, viz: to complain that God had not given his righteousness its just reward. His questioning of God was not the sin, but only the outward manifestation or evidence of his sin.

We may learn from this, therefore, that though God does not tempt us “with evil,” yet that it may be in accordance with His will that we should be tempted to outward acts, when they are only the evidences of our sin, and when the shame and misery they produce may lead us to see the sin in its true light, and to repent of it; for then these outward acts, though the fruits of evil, may have good effects.

Though at first sight, therefore, God’s commission to Satan to tempt Job seems strange, yet on closer examination it appears not to be so. We must be careful to consider well what may seem strange in God’s dealings with us—in accordance with St. Peter’s warning that we are not to think it “strange concerning the fiery trial that is to try us as though some strange thing happened unto us, but to rejoice, inasmuch as we are partakers of Christ’s sufferings” (1 Pet. iv, 12, 13). And this evidently refers to temptations rather than to bereavements or losses. Of the former, St.

Paul says "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to men; but God is faithful, and will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x, 13). And He was thus faithful to Job; for though he fell, he was enabled to repent.

Fourth. We see an adaptation by God of His punishments to the particular case; teaching us that He deals with each of us according to our need—according to the particular character of our temperament and surroundings. Not one single sorrow or trial fell on Job that could have been spared him. Of this we may be absolutely certain. If Job had been too fond of his children, their removal would probably have been all that was necessary; if he had been too greedy of earthly fame or reputation, its loss would probably have been sufficient; if he had loved his wealth too much, his poverty would perhaps have healed him of covetousness; if the love of pleasure had been his snare, bodily affliction might have saved him. But Job's sin was neither of these. It was deeper and broader than them all. His self-righteousness was the sin of his heart, the idol of his worship. So inveterate had this worship become that he did not know how evil it was; and his *prosperity and happiness* in all his worldly interests, were to him the *evidences of his righteousness*. To rouse him, therefore, *all* must be removed from him. To prove to him that he was self-righteous, rather than righteous, his *evidences* must be taken away; until he could say with the Psalmist, "before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word" (Ps. cxix, 67). *Let us clearly see and remember, that God, of necessity, deals with each of us according to our need, and according to our various dispositions and circumstances.*

Fifth. As in the general view of God's dealings with us, in the preceding chapter, we again find here the truth that all His punishments are *for the sake of reformation*. That was evidently the whole object in Job's case. There was no wrath exhibited, no vengeance displayed. God speaks of him to Satan in terms of gentleness, and of approbation of his other virtues, at the very time that Job was in that state of sin which called for such terrible chastisements. He then speaks of him in the very same terms that He uses when Job had afterwards humbled himself under His mighty hand. His whole dealing with him is marked by the calm and kind manner of the surgeon, when he is about some terrible operation which is necessary to save life. Thank God, we can find nowhere, even in His most painful dealings with us, any evidence of vengeance, but only of an unspeakable love, *bent on our reformation*.

Even in the cases of the nations destroyed utterly, men, women and children, by the command of God to the Jews, it was not wrath, but *mercy and love* which removed them from a probation in which they had hopelessly degraded themselves, to another scene of trial; where, under a plainer view of spiritual things, and a severer discipline, they might yet be redeemed. Especially was it a mercy to the children that they should be removed while yet in innocence from inevitable corruption and misery.

Sixth. The preceding deductions from the narrative teach us God's purposes, and modes of work in relation to us; but there still remains another grand lesson to be drawn from it—a lesson without which in some form we could never see how the holiness of God could be reconciled with the existence of evil. It is the lesson that though God's corrections seemed to Job for a long time very evil, as they often do to us; yet that they are in truth good things, because

their object and effect are to bring good out of evil—the evil of sin, which, as we have seen, God could not prevent without a violation of man's nature and His own. So that it may be truly said, "Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth" (Job v, 17). This plainly appears from the experience of Job, in harmony with that of the Psalmist, "it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes" (Ps. cxix, 71); and also in harmony with the express declaration of God—when He once let slip His thunders upon an entire people who had abandoned Him—that He did it "for their good" (Jer. xxiv, 5). The trials and sorrows of life, which we call evil, are, therefore, in truth good, and good alone—provided it be also true that they, alone, or in combination with whatever others in the future, shall ultimately bring us through grace to a higher and better life.

Enlightened by the great principles laid down for our guidance in this wonderful book, let us now endeavor to illustrate their application to the various inequalities of life, viz: inequalities of *fortune*, inequalities of *spiritual opportunities*, and inequalities of *spiritual susceptibilities*.

Now, as we know, God's works are infinitely varied. Creative energy alone can and it *must* expand into this infinite variety. All nature, everything in heaven and earth, everything in God's entire universe, teaches us, in harmony with Scripture and our instinctive perceptions, that God, if he be God, must develop this creative energy in unending forms and relations. Even man—because made in the image of God—would be utterly miserable if restrained in the exercise of his faculties of invention, production and reproduction to the extent of his powers. The possession of faculties forbidden to exert themselves, would be unmitigated torture. To say that God should

restrain his creative power within any definite proportions, or in particular instances not involving a contradiction, is simply to say with the fool that there is no God.

Think of it, then—there are no two things alike, so far as we know, in God's entire universe. Oh, no, no, no—no two leaves of the forest wave in the same way! No two little face-spaces, in all their endless variations, can show the same features! No two of the heavenly hosts are alike in glory! No two human souls are alike in capacity or in destiny! Infinite, *infinite*, INFINITE variety is stamped on all God's works, whether physical, mental or moral!!!

We can now perceive what a field there is for infinite varieties of administration; for rewards and punishments and providential arrangements, suited to unending conditions of mind and temper and disposition—of which Job's case was only one, though a most instructive one.

First then—as to *inequalities of fortune*. We need not exemplify them by particular instances—they are apparent to us all, from the king on his throne, to the beggar on the dunghill; from those who stand upon the topmost height of every earthly comfort and refinement, to those who, in the dark valleys of life, groan under their heavy burdens of neglect and want. True it is that men may in some cases, sink into the lowest places of earthly fortune by their faults, or rise into the highest by their efforts; but it is equally true that, as a rule, the lot of different men is cast for them by what we call providential circumstances; and that usually the opportunities of fortune do not depend upon the man, but are provided for him without regard to any personal merit or demerit on his part.

Now on the concession that creative energy did justly and wisely, as it did inevitably, produce the variety above referred to; that this life is only preparatory for a higher life;

and that the discipline of sorrow will *ultimately* bring us through grace to a restoration of our lost estate, and is necessary for that end, we can easily reconcile our sense of justice with the unequal circumstances of joy or sorrow, of poverty or wealth, of apparent happiness or misery among men. On the conditions stated, the conclusion is inevitable that each has that fortune which is best adapted to deliver him from the power of sin, the only *real* evil that can afflict him; and so to educate him for that higher state for which he is intended after the brief dream of life is over.

In Job's case we see that these sorrows were exactly adapted to him, and necessary for his reformation. If they had failed in their end at the first, yet they might have been effectual, if in substance repeated again and again indefinitely. Nor can any reason be conceived why, in another probation, appropriate sorrows might not be even more effective than in this.

But if it be not true that that restoration will *ultimately* be brought about, either here or hereafter, by means of the dismal sorrows that surround us, or by others which we can conceive, then these inequalities of fortune must remain irreconcilable on reason, with the justice and mercy of God—for they have no *raison detre*.

We do not embrace in this argument the sufferings of infants. Our whole discussion relates to the question of evil in so far as intelligent and responsible beings are concerned. The sufferings of infants are inarticulate. We cannot interrogate them to know what they are, how great, or even whether they are *consciously* real. If they be so, they may have, for aught we know, some moral effect—according to the idea of the poet, who, speaking of a babe in heaven, says its life was—

“Rough only for a babe; but every step
Ta'en by her little bleeding feet, had left
It tracery upon her spirit now,
In tender lines of love and peace and praise.”

It may be so—we cannot tell; but one thing we know, that if we can vindicate as we think they may be vindicated, God's love and mercy and justice, in connection with the existence of evil, in so far as intelligent and responsible beings are concerned, no doubt will remain on any mind that the apparent sufferings of those innocent beings who are of “the kingdom of heaven,” could be as well explained if the elements of the investigation were equally in our possession.

But the inequalities of external fortune are not the only inequalities that exist, nor the most important. There are other inequalities to be accounted for, not caused in whole or in part by men themselves, as those of fortune sometimes are, but inequalities inherent in their providential circumstances, or in their natures. The individual instances which we shall give of these, will be of course as single sands from the sea-shore, but will we hope sufficiently illustrate the principles involved.

Second. There are great inequalities among us from our very birth in *spiritual opportunities*.

We take two instances which may cover all that lie between them.

One man is placed by no effort of his own in the very sunlight of God's smile. In his earthly prospects, in pecuniary means, in social standing, and in whatever else that may be desirable, nothing remains to be suggested that can contribute to his advantage. All evils that can be foreseen are warded off. All temptations of an external sort are as far as practicable removed. He is surrounded

by every influence that can contribute to his temporal and eternal weal. From his infancy pious parents point his eyes upwards. They teach him Divine things—they “talk of heaven, and lead the way.” The benign influences of the Sabbath-school, of parental instruction, of the services of the sanctuary, of prayer for guidance from on high, surround him like an atmosphere. As far as love and foresight, human and Divine, can provide for it, he is made as safe as a lamb in a sheltered fold, or as a lovely flower in a well-watered garden. His life conforms after its kind to this beginning, and in due time he ends his days in the peace of God and man, and enters into his eternal rest.

Another man is placed, by no fault of his own, in circumstances the very reverse of all this—though his lot is cast in a Christian land. From his infancy he is surrounded by squalid poverty—by an ignorance, blasphemy and depravity of which most of us can have no conception. He grows up, wallowing, like a pig, in some crowded tenement, such as those in the “Five Points” of New York, and in the very atmosphere of physical and moral corruption—in which morality and immorality are not even empty names, for the distinction between them is almost unknown. He hears of God only in the curses of rage and blasphemy. The name of Jesus is known to him only in the same way; and of him as a Saviour he never hears, or if he does, he knows no more what is meant by it than he does of the Copernican theory. He grows up with no conscience or with a perverted one; and he finds his place among the “dangerous” or “criminal classes,” by a law almost, if not quite, as urgent as the law of gravity. If by any chance he is brought temporarily, in after life, under the influences of the Gospel, or is even instructed in the first principles of that great lesson to

which Divine wisdom has assigned a lifetime of effort, and which, in our experience, requires it, he is like one learning the Chinese language without acquaintance with its symbols.

Now we reverently ask, in the holy name of the God of justice; we solemnly cry out to heaven and earth, in the joint names of love and mercy, and ask—*why this difference?*

You may say that if we could look into the past, and trace the ancestry of these two men, we could see that hereditary virtues in the one case, and hereditary vices in the other, had produced naturally and inevitably the two conditions—according to the law that the sins of the fathers are visited on the children. It may be so. We admit, in point of fact, the general operation of that law, so far as it affects the nation, the community, or even the earthly condition of the individual. The conditions of human life must be entirely changed, perhaps, if the sins of the fathers are not to be visited in this sense on the children; for as God cannot prevent the sins of men, neither can he always prevent this hereditary effect without changing man's nature. This effect appears distinctly in action in the case of the heathen nations—the brother-miserables of the unhappy man we have described. That admirably book—"The Bible and the Classics"—the fruit of forty years' labor by the late venerable Bishop Meade, of Virginia; and which may be his monument when his bishopric shall have been forgotten in all but the name—makes it clear that all the barbarous races of every age and clime, or their ancestors, originally possessed the true faith. For it proves that in all these religions are to be found traces, more or less distinct, of the fall, the sacrifice for sin, and the restoration of sinners through that sacri-

fice; and it also proves that the nearer we can get, in the history of any race, to the original revelation of God out of heaven, the clearer become these traces of truth. But the fathers departed from the faith more and more, generation after generation, till this original revelation was piled over, Pelion on Ossa, by mountains of error and corruption; and till midnight darkness settled down upon their descendants, leaving only here and there traces of these fundamental truths. Thus were the sins of the fathers visited upon the children.

But we utterly deny the justice of such a law in its operation or the *ultimate spiritual condition of the individual*. Here the eternal fatherhood of God comes in and reverses the operation of the law. There is, there *can* be no justice in any law which demands that a man shall be damned for his earthly father's sins, and therefore no such law is God's law. On the contrary, in matters of life and death, it is thus laid down by God Himself: "The soul that sinneth *it* shall die; the son shall not bear the iniquity of his father" (Ezekiel xviii, 20), but "every man shall be put to death for his own sin" (Deut. xxiv, 16).

Now, on the traditional dogma of future punishment which denies to the unhappy child of God whom we have described (and to his brother heathen) a new probation, though he had little or no chance in this one—he is to "lie down in everlasting burnings," for an ignorance for which he was not responsible, and for a moral depravity almost unavoidable in the circumstances in which he was placed. That dogma, then, cannot explain this inequality.

Third. There are great inequalities among us from our birth in *spiritual susceptibilities*.

Take several extreme cases, so that the principles which cover them may cover the infinite varieties of character that lie between them.

One of these extremes may be fitly represented by the life and character of the sainted Chisholm, whose pure and gentle spirit rose in 1855, on the wings of the pestilence, from Norfolk, that sad, fever-scourged "City by the Sea," to a purer air—from a charnel-house, to the "house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." We knew him well when he was a student of divinity. His sweet and gentle nature seemed almost too shrinking for effective action in this rough world; but only seemed so, as the sequel proved—for surely his was a heroic life and death. His face beamed with the light from inner purities. His manners were soft and almost timid. As a teacher of youth, he employed that higher and better discipline which none but the loving heart and reluctant hand can employ. When his scholars were idle or negligent, or ventured on those pranks and tricks by which they so often annoy their teachers, a word of earnest remonstrance and appeal from him, in pathetic rather than judicial tones, would often prove more effective than the rod in the hands of sterner teachers. In manner, in appearance, in conversation, in character, he always reminded us of the "beloved disciple." We verily believe that the slightest chastisement from his heavenly Father's hand would have proved more effective on him than desolating lightnings of penal discipline on sterner natures. We believe that he could scarcely have survived what he regarded as a withdrawal from him of his heavenly Father's face. Early called to serve his Master in that highest of all earthly service—the ministry of His Word—he grew in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord, till he seemed to those who knew him best as already, in spirit, severed from earth and meet for heaven.

Now we remark that this saintly man had all this, not by his own merit—he would have been the first to disclaim

it—but by the gift of God. Nay more, his original temperament, bestowed on him by God in his unconscious infancy, alone enabled him to become, so early, the recipient of such rich gifts of grace.

Compare this case with another—we do not name him—a man endowed by nature from his birth with volcanic passions of every kind; one organically perfect, and of intense vitality; one to whom the joys and pleasures and excitements of this carnal life are intensely alluring; one whose pulses of passion are to most of us inconceivably strong; one whose temptations are as tempests compared to the milder winds that blow us about; one on whom the streams of downward influence are very cataracts of Niagara as compared with the rapids that float us on below. This man is placed by God in a furnace of baleful fires, heated seven times hotter than it is wont to be heated. He is at the same time endowed with strong spiritual desires. A mighty conflict rages in his heart, which wrings from his soul at every frequent fall the cry—“Oh! wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” If to the last, he rises after every fall, with his weary eye still fixed on Christ, he is surely one of the anointed “kings and priests unto God.” But suppose he falls and does not rise again before the life-long battle ends! In either event there is great inequality between him and the Rev. James Chisholm—an inequality not produced by themselves, but by the conditions of their natures and temperaments for which they individually were not responsible, and which rendered it most difficult for the one and comparatively easy for the other to walk in the same heavenly path.

The traditional dogma as to future punishment cannot show the justice of this inequality.

But compare with these another case—one whose counterpart is known to most of us. He has much of the vitality and passion of the last without his spiritual susceptibility. By nature, rather than by habit, he is of the belligerent, aggressive and self-asserting type. He is obstinate in his opinions when once they are formed, and can be persuaded by no apparent earthly means from a predetermined course. He is impenetrable to rebuke, remonstrance or persuasion, and invulnerable to any of the ordinary chastisements of life. He has what seems to be an absolute incapacity to believe much more than he sees and hears and handles. To him, therefore, the things that are seen and temporal are the only real things; and the things that are unseen and eternal are visions of things that may or may not be true, but are too vague and intangible to be the basis of faith with him. All these things are conditions of nature or temperament, as said before, which were born with him. He is by no means a depraved or abandoned man—on the contrary, he sees that certain principles of virtue are indispensable for individual well being and for the good of the race; and he strives to propagate and live up to such principles. But he takes no personal interest in the Christian religion, because he thinks that no one can be certain about anything connected with it; and because the dissensions among Christians themselves prove to him that they who have studied it most understand it least—for each of the various creeds is at war with each other.

Take as a fourth case, the same type of man, differing from this one only in the fact that he leads a life of thorough self-indulgence in all the forms of sin, under the influence of his strong passions and the weakness of his moral restraints.

Now, character is a very complex thing, and in its for-

mation, temperament or natural disposition, may be more or less modified by proper culture. But the fact remains that natural capacities and incapacities are prime elements in awarding judgment on man's responsibility.

How then are we to account for the inequalities existing between the soul that is happily constituted and that which is unhappily constituted for moral effort? between the soul endowed with exquisite spiritual susceptibilities, and that which is comparatively insensible to such influences? All have to travel the same road, under the same penalties, but with unequal capacity to do the one or avoid the other.

The traditional dogma cannot explain the justice of these inequalities—which, let us bear in mind, are infinitely varied.

Now, in order to vindicate any government whatever, human or divine, inequalities of administration, however inevitable, *must* be accounted for and brought within the principles of justice. God Himself recognizes the propriety of this. He does not reply to an *honest* enquiry into the justice of any arrangement of His, as some of those who claim especially to know His will are accustomed to do. "Who art *thou* that replyest against God?" He reserves such language for those who desire rather to condemn Him than to vindicate His justice. He uses a different language to all honest investigators—"search and see," "try the spirits," be jealous of accepting as My will what may be told you by those who may or may not know it, till you have seen by honest prayerful examination, "whether these things be so." Even to those whose enquiries are mixed with cavilling, or are uncandid, He sometimes uses this language. When even the rebellious Jews charge Him with injustice or inequality in His ways, He vouchsafes,

instead of cutting off their speech, to reason with them and to prove His justice to them by an appeal to facts and to their consciences. On one of these occasions, He thus answers them: "Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord, and not that he should return from his ways and live? * * * Yet ye say that the way of the Lord is *not equal*. Hear now, O house of Israel, is not *My* way equal? Are not *your* ways unequal? * * * for I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord; wherefore turn yourselves and live" (Eze. xviii, 23-32). This is in answer to complaint of injustice, on account, among other things, of the supposed responsibility of the children for the sins of the fathers already noticed. These various texts contain the lesson that we are entitled to enquire into apparent inequalities.

Now, on the concession that the Heavenly Father is in truth, as He says He is, like an earthly father in love and forbearance, and much more loving and forbearing than he, we may reasonably suppose that He will not confine His children to one brief probation, in which alone they can prepare for heaven or escape hell. If this be so, all difficulties are removed, all inequalities are adjusted.

Let us see if it be not so. We have already seen—following Dr. Bledsoe—that sin is the assertion of a free will in things forbidden by God; that it is a contradiction in terms to talk of coercing a free will or enforcing love, and that therefore God could not prevent sin without a contradiction, which is impossible with God. Hence the only real question in regard to God's holiness in connection with evil is, as Dr. Bledsoe truly says, why He *created* beings whom He knew would surely fall into sin. We have endeavored to show (Part I, ch. vi) that Dr. Bledsoe has not answered this question satisfactorily; and that it can-

not be answered satisfactorily on the traditional theory in regard to future punishment. But we think it can be answered satisfactorily on the theory of ultimate restoration of the universe to peace and harmony; or on what will practically amount to the same thing, so far as we are concerned, the theory that man's nature involves a capacity for repentance after dissolution of the flesh, as well as before that dissolution. The argument on that theory will, in brief, stand thus: The creation of a free agent is necessary to the glory of the universe, and Creative power can be contented, in the nature of things, with nothing less than such a being. Such a being may fall, and thus evil will irresistably result. It is unjust that God should create beings who may fall into exquisite and *hopeless* sufferings, in spite of Divine power to prevent it. But, on the other hand, it is just and merciful and worthy of Divine power to create beings who will fall if their sufferings are temporary and only such as are necessary to fit them each for the highest state of which his nature is capable, and which he could not attain as a free agent without such temporary sufferings as may be adapted to his peculiar case. Hence we may conclude that evil is necessary if God is to create free agents, but that it is not eternal, and shall not triumph over God: for He can bring it to an end, consistently with the freedom of the will, by the temporary suffering of man, through the eternal salvation of Christ; and in truth turn it into good.

On this argument neither the inequalities of life nor the existence of evil can present any difficulty to an intelligent mind; as we proceed to illustrate still further.

We have learned from the book of Job that God works personally and specially in the case of each of us, not only on a fixed and inexorable law, but on the principles of

equity; that He employs in this work every agency at His command in heaven earth and hell, for our redemption; that He adapts the circumstances of sorrow bereavement or temptation best fitted to arouse us from our sinful state, to our peculiar temperaments and conditions; and that He does all this in love and mercy—because solely intended for our reformation and happiness; not only here, but especially, *in our future life*.

What, then, is that life? It is designed to be a higher and better life, we know—but what sort of life? Is it to be a life of peace and rest alone, of joy and praise and heavenly song? Is it to be a life of mere luxurious enjoyment of the blessings of perfect health of body and mind and soul, and of angelic social intercourse? These, and much more than these, will no doubt thrill with joy every heart in that glorious home; but these will be, we must believe, only a part and the smaller part of that ineffable bliss; or, rather, these will be but the sequel or the interludes in that which is far higher—active service of our God in such work as may be prescribed by Him for each of us. Let any Christian, even here, cease or slack from work for God in his appropriate sphere, and he will know from bitter experience how his faith languishes, his love grows cold, and his joy in God withers like a frosted flower. And so it must be there, for our natures will not be changed otherwise than by being purified through Christ. Luxurious self-indulgence, idle seeking of mere happiness, would introduce discord and misery even into that blessed abode. Happiness is a maid divine, too coy to be caught when sought for her own sake alone, but she will fly speedily, adorned with bewitching smiles of love and tenderness, and rest all her charms of grace and beauty on the bosom of Him who has allured her by brave and

faithful service of her Father and her God. Let a man cease from work even in this world, and though you crown him with wealth and fame and all that men most prize, yet he will be wretched and miserable. It has often been said that the hardest work any man ever did was to do nothing. His nature demands effort, and both here and yonder that demand must be met, if he is to be happy, by constant employment.

When our Saviour tells us that in His "Father's house are many mansions" (John xiv, 12); when we are told in so many texts that each man's position there will be assigned him according to the deeds done in the body; that there are degrees of glory in the Father's house, &c.,—we are to understand that in this world we are, each of us, being moulded and prepared for some particular purpose, some particular employment, which shall be peculiarly our own. Some are being prepared, like "Michael, the prince," (Dan. xii, 1) for God's sterner work—to lead his embattled hosts or execute his judgments; some, like "Lucifer, son of the morning," before he fell, to rule some world, some star-cluster, some nebula, or some other mighty province of God's universal empire; some, like Gabriel, to "stand in the presence of God," ready to "fly swiftly" and convey His gracious will (Luke i); and some—ah! let us not forget them, the gentle, loving Johns—to participate in the pure atmosphere nearest the throne, with cherubim and seraphim and all the angelic hosts, in all ecstatic ministries of delightful service. The things that are unseen by us here are, as we are told in Scripture, the *real* things, and all this blessed work will be intensely real.

Now, it would be folly in any father or teacher to subject a gentle, timid nature to the severe experience or discipline that may be essential to fit a sterner character for

his appropriate work or position in life. It would absolutely unfit him for the station he might otherwise fill well. We may be sure then that God will do no such thing. If He needs to develop a being for the gentler ministries of heaven He may endow and discipline one like the saintly Chisholm; if one is needed for sterner or more active work, the endowments and discipline of the more intractable characters with whom he has been compared might be appropriate to that end. But if their earthly discipline, through fierce temptations operating on human infirmity, or through lack of spiritual susceptibility, either inborn or induced by sin, cannot be made effective here, why may it not be made so in conjunction with the discipline of that world where the spiritual eyes are opened to its realities, and where the shadowy things of earth have passed away. It may well be that privation in this life of the gifts of fortune, of spiritual opportunity, and of spiritual susceptibility in one case, and their full bestowal in another, would prove, in connection with a future probation, the most appropriate and even indispensable conditions of that highest happiness and perfection of which each is capable, and of the overthrow of all evil.

It thus appears that all conceivable inequalities may, on the theory we maintain, be easily reconciled, not only with justice and equity, but with the highest good of the creature. Wisdom and love can both applaud them since they are consistent with bestowing on each the greatest good of which his peculiar nature is susceptible, and since his ultimate restoration to the favor of God will render all temporary experiences of sorrow so utterly insignificant that he can join with the Psalmist in the highest possible conviction that it was good for him to have been afflicted.

Nay, given the condition that God designs ultimately

to bring to an end the reign of sin and to restore the harmony of His entire universe, and we can have no difficulty in understanding that infinitely varied inequalities in temporal dispensations are the *only* means which wisdom and love can employ to mould to that blessed plan the infinitely varied natures of intelligent creatures. No other course is possible or would be just and merciful in dealing with free agents whose wills are not to be coerced but persuaded into harmonious action.

Let us pause here and gather up the more prominent truths we have thus far attained.

First. We have seen (Part I, ch. v) that there is no word in Scripture which compels the belief of a *hopeless* punishment in the world to come.

Second. We have also seen (Ib. ch. vi, et supra) that there is nothing in the nature of man or the nature of sin which forbids us to hope that the lost soul may repent and turn to God in the future life.

Third. In the last chapter (Part II, ch. i) we took a positive step, and showed that God's nature, as our Father and his connection with us in that relation, are plain bases of that hope—nay, that we could not give effect to His Word revealing that relation in its simplicity and truth, or realize it in its wonderful glory without accepting that hope.

Fourth. We now take another positive step and show that all sorrows and bereavements and losses; all inequalities of fortune and of spiritual endowments, and all difficulties in respect to the existence of evil, can be explained and reconciled with the justice and love of God on the basis of that hope—but that without that hope midnight darkness and gloom surround all these questions.

In the next chapter we hope to show that these conclusions are affirmatively supported by Scripture.

CHAPTER III.

THE DIVINE PLAN OF CREATION, AND OF SALVATION.

WE learn from Scripture that the plan of *creation and salvation*, was considered and arranged in the councils of the eternal Godhead, before the world began.

We read that “the Word,” or Christ, “was in the beginning with God; all things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John i, 2, 3). This is spoken of Christ as distinguished, *in His mediatorial character*, from the Godhead. And when we are told, in this sense, that without Him nothing was made, we are to understand that without a mediator, nothing *could* have been made—for inevitable evil would have brought universal and remediless misery to all the works of God; and, therefore, it would have been inconsistent with the character of God to have made them.

Accordingly, in perfect harmony with this view, we read in Heb. i, 2, that God “hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, Jesus Christ, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, *by whom* also He *made the worlds*”—worlds whose creation could not have been permitted by His justice and mercy, without the prearranged salvation of Christ. Therefore, we further read in 2 Tim. i, 9, 10, that God “hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to *our works*, but according to *His own purpose and grace* which was given us in Christ Jesus, *before the world began*; but is now made manifest by the appearing

of our Saviour Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." We learn from this that *in the councils of eternity*, Christ was ordained to call men, by His merit, not theirs, from the sin into which they would fall; and that He would make that call so effectual, as actually to "*abolish death*"—that death which sin would introduce.

St. Paul, speaking of these wondrous things, declares them to be "*the wisdom of God in a mystery, which God ordained before the world unto our glory*" (1 Cor. ii, 7). And he blesses God that "He hath chosen us" in Christ, "*before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love*" (Eph. i, 4).

The Saviour Himself crowns the truth of an eternally ordained salvation, when in His last prayer *as Mediator*, he says, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with Thee *before the world was*" (John xvii, 5). This glory, we may not doubt, was the glory of devising the creation and restoration of all things.

To form, therefore, an intelligent idea of creation and salvation, we must look at them *as a whole* so far as we may be enabled by God's Holy Word to do so. To attempt to understand salvation, without its component part, the plan of creation, or creation without the scheme of salvation on which it is based, would be like the attempt to understand a world by examining one of its hemispheres alone. The failure to bear this in mind always is doubtless the source of much of the vagueness and confusion which involve the question of the future destiny of our race.

Since we are made "in the image of God—after his likeness," and are, therefore, invested with the Divine capacities in kind, though they are infinitely lower than the

Divine in degree, we are capable of understanding in some dim measure the Divine emotions and plans as revealed to us in Scripture. And, therefore, we are honored with a glorious privilege—we are earnestly invited by our Father in heaven to “search the Scriptures,” to see what is the truth about these great things; to test every “doctrine whether it be of God” (John vii, 17); to try the spirits (those who teach us) whether *they* are of God” (1 John iv, 1). It is not then presumptuous in us reverently to attempt in the light of Scripture the realization of the mode in which our Father in heaven *did* consider and elaborate the plan of creation and salvation, “before the world was.” The plan we might conceive would indeed be worth nothing as matter of proof, if it should not be in harmony with what He has revealed. But if it should prove to be at least equally in harmony with His revelation with any other plan; and should, moreover, cover the whole ground, harmonize His justice and His mercy, and remove the difficulty of conceiving how evil in this world and the next can consist with His holiness—then may we indeed rejoice to believe that we have the true thread which can lead us out of the labyrinths of doubt and difficulty by which we are beset. *A fortiori*, if the Scripture confirms that plan, we may consider it conclusively established, even though it should be thought there is nothing *positive* in Scripture on the subject.

We think, however, that the plan we shall submit is not only marked by all the foregoing features, but that Scripture fairly interpreted establishes it positively.

We may then conceive our God and Father in heaven, sitting in those councils of eternity of which we read above, and devising our world. From the lips of Jehovah we may hear, with adoring awe, the first words—“Let us

create another heaven and earth; let us fill it with beauty and joy; let us crowd its seas, its continents and its firmament with "living things"—with birds, with fishes, and with things moving in the waters; with cattle and creeping things and things moving on the earth. Let us make the earth bring forth all the food needed for the sustenance of all these living things. Let us adorn it with light and warm it with genial heat, so that all may be happy there; nor let us stay our hand till the whole shall be so perfect that we ourselves shall say it is 'very good.' Our angelic hosts will rejoice to see this new exhibition of our love and power. They will rejoice to visit another happy world, floating in the depths of boundless space, where they can study with a new delight still further manifestations of our infinite Creative work, until we increase their ecstasy with a greater wonder still. Till then they will see beautiful creatures in unending variety, and possessing for them the charm that they are mere inert matter, moulded into intricate and diverse forms of living grace. These creatures, so strange to them, because so unlike them in having no 'gift Divine,' no knowledge even of their Maker's love, will yet inspire them with pleasing thoughts of our glory and our might. Then, while they are thus engaged, let us surprise them with a new wonder and delight—'let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness' (Gen. i, 26), but yet 'a little lower than the angels' (Ps. viii, 5; Heb. ii, 7). This younger and weaker brother will call forth all their tenderness and give them a new and delightful employment—the ministry of service (Heb. i, 14), the joy of bestowing happiness upon those less favored than themselves. Their present bliss derived from us shall thus be enhanced until they 'shout for joy.'

"But here a great difficulty springs up—if we create man

endowed with Divine capacities, his will cannot then be controlled by us. His liability to fall will be inseparable from the freedom of his will. Living in the world, and thus, unlike the angels, away from the shelter of his Father's home, seeing only by faith instead of having constant communion with us, he may forget us, and rebel against us, by doing his own will instead of our's. Nay, we foresee that he will do so, as we foresee that even some of the angels will not keep their first estate. If they shall fall—from our very side, and in our presence—how much more shall he? Weak he will be, by reason of flesh and sense, urging his will to self-assertion; and the contagious influence of depraved example in others, when once sin begins to work, will intensify this evil tendency. At the same time the fallen angels will seek to involve him in the same ruin with themselves. If he resists them he will no longer be wrestling against flesh and blood, like himself, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of the world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places (Ephesians vi, 12). Yes, he will surely fall. Every man and woman that shall live will fall. All will depart from us and be filled with their own devices (Prov. i, 31). This fall will bring in death, and the bitter sting of that death will be *sin* (1 Cor. xv, 56)—a constant resistance of our authority, the consequent ruin of our world, and with it an end of that universal harmony which now fills our entire creation, and which is the joy and glory of God.

“I AM, I am power, I am justice, I am mercy, I am joy, I am peace, I am love (1 John iv, 16), I am ‘over all’ (Rom. ix, 5), I am ‘all in all’ (1 Cor. xv, 28)—*irreparable evil cannot therefore be brought into our universe.* How then can we create a being who, in spite of all that power and

love can do, will immediately sink into hideous and *hopeless* misery and ruin? True, we are not God if we cannot create at will infinite varieties of forms and endowments. Creative wisdom and love and power cannot be content with mere negative forms of being. The Divine Spirit *must* expand into higher effort. It has already done so in the ministering spirits that surround the Godhead, and execute our supreme will. Even man, if he should be created, endowed as he would be with a divinely restless mind, would, from his very nature, multiply the works of his hands in unending forms. If he should be denied the right to do so, his existence would be an unmitigated curse; and gloom, wretchedness and despair would forever deprive him of a moment's peace, far more of joy. The very first demand of his nature would be employment, invention, various development of his God-given powers. He had as well, nay, far better be an oyster or a stone, than to be the possessor of powers capable of perpetual and blissful exercise, and yet be forbidden the lawful employment of them. And this is simply because he would be made in *our* image. The Divinity that would stir within him would be but a spark of that creative energy which is an essential part of our infinite love and power. Our divinity, then, cannot deny itself (2 Tim. ii, 13), and must therefore exercise itself in all creative or productive energy that is consistent with our holiness.

“But can creative power be justly exercised on *any* creature, which, by the act of creation, is immediately placed where *creative wisdom knows that it will fall into hopeless misery and ruin, without a remedy from that creative power itself?* True, creative power *must* of necessity be exerted, but creative holiness cannot permit its exertion if *absolute* evil will result to the object of this creative power. Such

an act would bring confusion and contradiction into a world made and ruled by infinite wisdom and love—and God cannot be the ‘author of confusion, but of peace’ (1 Cor. xiv, 33). He cannot create one who shall be tempted to *hopeless* ruin, knowing that he will certainly fall under the temptation; for then it would not be true that ‘God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man’ (James i, 13). No glory of ours could justify such utter and hopeless misery without end. That glory, to be pure, must harmonize with justice to each of its elements or constituent parts. It would be dearly bought at the expense of injustice or wrong to the meanest of our creatures, for justice doth thrice demand that if any man sin, he must be put to death for his own sin alone (Deut. xxiv, 16; 2 Kings xix, 6; 2 Chron. xxv, 4), and not from any considerations of advantage to ourselves or others. The glory of our universe would be marred and stained all over by the anguish of a single intelligent or sensitive being, languishing for its sake, *incurably*, anywhere within its boundless space. *Evil and disorder would triumph over God, and would themselves be Gods.*

“Here, then, is the difficulty that demands eternal counsels—a Divine necessity to create a being who will surely fall, immediately, into sin, and bring in universal misery; the Divine holiness inconsistent with the continuance of that evil, because God must be all in all. Man’s creation necessary—man’s ruin inevitable, in spite of any means that God can employ, because man’s will is free.

But with us the end is seen from the beginning, for with God nothing shall be impossible (Luke i, 37). Our counsels are but the echo of the infallible word of power. On the condition that evil can be made temporary; that a provision can be made for the redemption of man from his

fall—a provision so complete and so potent that we foresee that by an acceptance of it man can and will be redeemed; that some under one dispensation of external circumstances, and some under another; that some in a shorter, and others in a longer time; that some in this world, and others in the next—each after his own manner and according to his peculiar disposition and character, *yet all at last*—will accept this provision, then surely there is no inconsistency with holiness in creating such beings. The temporary evil resulting from the creation of such a being will not be *absolute* evil—for it may and will, on the condition of ultimate overthrow, be in truth converted by that overthrow into *an eternal good*: because it will have given needful experience to the creature, it will have inured the soul to contest against all that is contrary to the will of God, and taught it the danger of a fall.

“Man may *thus* be justly created. And so ‘let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’”

Before producing the texts which, as we think, will be found not only to be in harmony with this view, but to establish it—in connection with those already cited—let us lay down the principle on which their weight is to be estimated.

It is what we will call the *mathematical* principle, and is one which is to be found stated in the books on morals and on law. It applies to the proof both of facts and of doctrines. It will probably be found stated nowhere more clearly and tersely than by *Wills* “*on Circumstantial Evidence*,” ch. viii, § 2, p. 239. We quote from the first American, following the third English edition:

“In proportion to the number of cogent circumstances, each separately bearing a strict relation to the same inference, the stronger their united force becomes, and the more

secure becomes our conviction of the moral certainty of the fact they are alleged to prove; as the intensity of light is increased by the concentration of a number of rays to a common focus. It is forcibly remarked by a learned writer, that the 'more numerous are the particular analogies, the greater is the force of the general analogy resulting from the fuller induction of facts, not only from the mere accession of particulars, but from the additional strength which each particular derives by being surveyed jointly with other particulars, as one among the correlative parts of a system' (Hampden's Essay, p. 63). Although neither the combined effect of the evidence, nor any of its elements, admits of numerical computation, it is indisputable that the proving power increases with the number of the independent circumstances and witnesses, according to a geometrical progression. Such evidence, in the words of Dr. Reid (Essay on the Intell. Pow., ch. iii), may be compared to a rope made of many slender filaments twisted together. The rope has strength sufficient to bear the stress laid upon it, though no one of the filaments of which it is composed would be sufficient for that purpose."

In *Starkie on Evidence* (margin p.) 853, the same principle is laid down, and he says "the probability derived from the concurrence of a number of independent probabilities increases not in a merely cumulative, but in a compound and multiplied proportion. This is a consequence derived from pure abstract mathematical principles."

The probabilities in favor of the truth towards which a number of concurring facts or authorities converge, are almost innumerable; and even if a converging series of facts or principles could be found pointing in the other direction, it would present a case in which the superior *weight* of the probabilities in either direction must decide

the matter. All scientific truth results from a comparison of probabilities; for as Froude says in his "Plea for the free discussion of theological difficulties" (Short Studies), "the conclusions of science are never more than in a high degree probable; they are no more than the best explanation of phenomena, which are attainable in the existing state knowledge." Nor need we expect a higher degree of certainty in most of the disputed questions of theology.

We not only believe, however, that the theory of God's moral government which we here present, is a far better "explanation of phenomena" than can be presented by the traditional view; but that it rises to a still higher plane. We have already seen (Part I, ch. v) that there is nothing in Scripture which, if fairly interpreted, is in conflict with our theory; and of course, therefore, that there is no converging series of facts or principles pointing in the other direction. If, therefore, a large number of converging texts can be produced which are favorable to it, a conclusive case will be made out on the principle above laid down.

We invoke this principle for the benefit of those who may be inclined to think that the texts we shall produce, taken separately, are like the filaments of the rope, insufficient for our purpose, as tending very slightly in our direction. We shall produce, for the benefit of candid investigators of this class, a body of texts which, for the number of human agents employed in writing them, for the various circumstances under which they were written, and for their apparent relation to the subject, derive strength from each other "*according to a geometrical progression,*" and together make a rope of authority which cannot be broken.

We ourselves do not regard the principle as necessary for our purpose, for we feel sure that most of the texts we shall adduce are conclusive in themselves by their own

inherent weight; and that taken altogether they constitute a revelation that is absolutely indisputable, if candidly considered.

Well might Isaiah say: "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (xlv, 15), for men have been constantly stumbling amid the apparent contradictions in His word already referred to, and are now daily saying of Him, in regard to this and almost every other question: "Lo He is here, lo He is there." Yes, God delights to hide Himself from us, that He may stimulate us to search for Him. Let us endeavor to find Him on this question:

In Isaiah lvii, 15-16, is a text which we have already referred to as a "side-light" against the idea of annihilation. It is a direct light against the idea of a hopeless punishment. "For thus sayeth the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before Me, and the souls which I have made." Now, here is as plain a declaration as can be made that if God should continue to withdraw His face from any of His creatures, their souls and spirits would fail before Him—or, in other words, be annihilated; and He declares almost in terms that this cannot be, and that, therefore, He cannot be wroth forever. The alternative presents itself then, either that because God cannot be wroth forever, a contrite and humble heart *must* be developed some day in every one of us; or else that some day the souls of all who are not "contrite and humble" must be *annihilated*. The idea of annihilation we have already

endeavored to prove inconsistent with the wisdom and foresight of God; but whether so or not, the text remains opposed to the idea of an endless and hopeless punishment.

Again, in Matt. xii, 32, we read that "*all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world which is to come.*"

The advocates of the traditional dogma contradict this text. According to their doctrine there is no repentance in "the world which is to come"; but here it seems to be plainly implied that there *is* such repentance. We have already seen (Part I, ch. v) that St. Augustine allows this—saying in his commentary on the text, "for it would not be truly said of some that they are forgiven neither in this age (*seculo*) nor in the future, were there not some who, though not in this, are forgiven in the future."

But some one will say that the text proves that there is at least one sin, which will not be forgiven in the future life. Does the text prove this? Theologians have vainly attempted to define this mysterious sin against the Holy Ghost. The general, if not the universal conclusion is now, we believe, that it is not a specific sin at all, but a persistent habit of resisting the Holy Spirit of God, so that His restraining and renewing influences cannot become operative. But suppose it *be* some specific sin—the text only declares that it shall not be forgiven in the æon that is to succeed the existing æon. It does not declare that it shall *never* be forgiven. The language is that it shall not be forgiven *ἐν τούτῳ τῷ αἰῶνι οὔτε ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι*. This last word conveys as well the idea of an immediate as of a remote

succession; so that the words may read "in this æon, nor in that which is about to come." But whether so or not, the Scripture in the original preserves here (in the word *αἰῶνι*), as everywhere else, the same indefiniteness as to the *quantitative* duration of retribution. So that even he who commits the sin against the Holy Ghost, though he may not be forgiven in some future *æon*, may yet be forgiven at *some* time in the future. This text, therefore, while apparently excepting for an æon or a *time* him who sins against the Holy Ghost, is yet full authority for the proposition that "*all manner of sin*" may be forgiven in the future life as well as in this.

If this be not the true interpretation of the text, then this mysterious sin, whatever it may be, may constitute the sole exception to our theory; for it is the *only* case in which there is not forgiveness of "*all manner of sin*" in the "world that is to come," as well as in this.

Again, the traditional dogma is much narrower than the following text. In Tim. iv, 10, St. Paul, after speaking of the profitableness of Godliness, says: "for therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the *Saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.*"

Now, from this text we learn that though Christ is the Saviour of those who believe *while in this world* in an *especial* sense; yet that in *some* sense he is the Saviour of *all*, whether they believe in this world or not. But on the traditional dogma, he is in *no* sense the Saviour of those who do not believe while in this world. He does indeed *offer* them salvation, but if they reject it he cannot be their Saviour. So that dogma contradicts this text also. Our theory, on the other hand, affirms the text, in an intelligible sense. It is entirely proper to say that those who believe

while in this world are saved in an especial manner, because *they* are to be "made unto God kings and priests, and shall reign on the earth" (Rev. v, 10); and because they escape the bitter intermediate sorrows and sufferings of those who delay or protract their coming to Him.

In Isaiah xlv, 22-24, it is said: "Look unto me and be ye saved, *all ye ends of the earth*, for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by *Myself*—the word is gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return—that unto Me *every knee shall bend, every tongue confess*. Surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength; even to Him shall men come; and all that are incensed against Him shall be ashamed before Him."

This declaration is repeated in Phil. ii, 9, 11, where, after exalting the self-sacrifice of Christ, the apostle says: "Wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus *every knee should bow of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth*, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." The apostle then exhorts us to work out our own salvation with "fear and trembling," assuring us of the help of God. We need to do so with fear and trembling because it seems, as was said before, that those who come to Christ in this world, are to be "made unto God kings and priests, and shall reign on the earth" (Rom. v, 10), and because also they escape all the sufferings of the future world which those who reject Him here must endure before they are finally saved.

The adherents of the traditional dogma are wont to interpret these and similar texts as describing a *compulsory* confession. They add other words to the text, and say the confession will be one, "willing or enforced," &c. There

is nothing, however, in the texts, or anywhere else, to justify such an interpretation, but the contrary. Neander, in his Church History (note to pp. 676, 678, vol. 2), states that Didymus in his exposition of this passage "speaks of calling on the name of Christ, which extends to the salvation of all." Perhaps Didymus knew no more about it than other people, but those who like the authority of "the Fathers" may like his confession. If we liked their authority better than we do, we might cite a goodly number of them in support of these views.

Now, here are texts in which God declares not only that to Him in the name of His Son Jesus *every* tongue shall confess and *every* knee shall bow of things in heaven and earth and under the earth, but He has *sworn by Himself* in righteousness that it shall be so; and here we are to remark, as well as in connection with the texts hereafter to be adduced, that "things under the earth" are almost, if not universally held by theologians to mean things in *hades* and in *hell*, including the lost souls of men and of the fallen angels.

Take another text. In 1 Tim. ii, 4, 6, it is declared that "God our Saviour * * * will have *all men* to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a *ransom for all to be testified in due time.*"

Now, it is not the fact that Christ is our mediator that is to be thus testified. That had been already done, by the prophets, by Christ himself, by Paul who wrote these lines: but the thing *yet* to be testified (or made manifest in a practical way) is, that he who gave himself a *ransom for all* will have *all men to be saved*. And the reason why this truth, so plainly revealed, is to be remitted for its ful-

fillment to some future time, is, plainly, because the work of His grace could not be completed finally in this world (as we shall see more plainly hereafter), inasmuch as many men would fail or refuse to accept that ransom, till the realities of the future world should "in due time" incline them to it. This text corresponds on this point with those from 1 Cor. xv and Rev. iv, 5, to be cited presently.

We come now to more important texts; to those which make such plain and positive statements on this momentous subject, that it is a marvel they have not always been considered conclusive of it. We feel sure they would always have been so considered, but for the bias produced by the false interpretations of the texts in regard to the *æonian* punishment, which have been already exposed.

In 1 Peter iii, 18, et seq., we read that "Christ * * * hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but quickened in the spirit; by which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison." Then follows a reference to those who repented not in the days of Noah. This passage has always been a difficult one to the traditional theologians, and many curious contortions have been made around it by the commentators, in order to make it square with their theories. But one thing is clear, that at some time and under some circumstances Christ preached to the souls "in prison." It may have been at the time when, according to that universal confession—the apostles' creed—He "went into the place of departed spirits." But wherever it was, *since He went as the Christ*, He could, we may feel sure, have preached to them only the gospel of peace. The text is a stumbling block and a snare, or else utterly inexplicable on the traditional dogma about future punishment; but is entirely intelligible on

our theory. If the lost are capable of repentance hereafter, nothing could be more fitting than the announcement to them by Christ himself of His redeeming love, by which alone their repentance could be made effective. The fact that there is only one text of this sort, amounts to nothing against its teaching; for to him who believes it is God's word, one text is as conclusive as a million.

In Ephesians i, 9-11, after a glowing description of the redeeming love of God in Christ, the apostle tells us that God has "made known unto us *the mystery* of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath *purposed in Himself*; that *in the dispensation of the fulness of times*, He might gather together *in one all things in Christ*, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him."

It is impossible for language to convey to us more strongly than this does the plain statement that it is God's purpose, *not in this earthly time*, but in the dispensations of His grace, in the "*fulness of the times*" (plural *τῶν καιρῶν*), to restore all things to Himself in Christ. A cavil can scarcely be made in respect to it. It may indeed be said that the things "under the earth" are not alluded to here as in the text from Philippians above cited. But to such a mere cavil the answer is plain. The controlling words in that text are "every knee," "every tongue," and in this the controlling words are the "all things" that are to be gathered together "*in one*" in Christ. The other language is merely expletive.

But let us take another text which is even more conclusive than this, and to which such a cavil cannot be made with a grave face; for though the terminal words are practically the same, yet the ruling words exclude the cavil even more decidedly than those above. After another and still more glowing eulogy of Christ, the apostle tells us in

his epistle to the Colossians i, 18-20, that he is "the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; and, having *made peace* through the blood of his cross, by him to *reconcile all things unto himself*; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Now, if ideas can be conveyed by words, we understand it to be here declared that it pleased God to make *peace* through the blood of Christ. Peace where? Why, peace where there was no peace before—peace everywhere—peace throughout a discordant universe; for by this alone could He "*reconcile all things*" unto Himself. The language includes *everything* that is not at peace. God will not, as men sometimes do, "make a desolation and call it peace," but He will bring in the *fulness* of peace that is found in Christ.

Can language be more positive? If it is possible for it to be so, we now cite texts which may illustrate that possibility:

In 1 Cor. xv, 22-26, we read that "as in Adam *all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits; *afterward* they that are Christ's *at His coming*. *Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power*. For He must reign *till He hath put all enemies under His feet*. The *last enemy* that shall be destroyed is *death*."

And in 2 Tim. i, 10 (already quoted), it is said that the grace of God is "made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Christ, who hath *abolished death*, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."

Now, in reference to the death in Adam, and the life in Christ for *all men*, the words “as” and “even so,” in our version, are represented in the original by the words *ὡςπερ* and *οὕτω*, which may be translated so that the text will read “in the same way or manner as in Adam *all* die, so in this way or in like manner in Christ shall *all* be made alive.” As death came upon all in the one case, so exactly shall life be restored to all in the other. As the corrupt nature derived from Adam did, with the concurrence of *all*, bring death upon *all*, so the grace of Christ, with the concurrence of *all*, shall restore *all* to life. It is not merely a doctrinal statement, but is, like the rest of this chapter, a prophetic declaration of the *fact* that all shall be made alive in Christ. The apostle then proceeds to illustrate the truth he has stated. He declares that though this will be, yet that it will be accomplished in a certain “order” *at* and *after* the resurrection. Of that resurrection Christ is the “first fruits” already garnered. “Afterwards,” to wit, *at* the resurrection, there will be other fruits, viz: “they that are Christ’s at His coming;” and they will “meet the Lord in the air,” with the “dead in Christ” who have already risen, as we learn from 1 Thess. iv.

“Then (*εἶτα*) cometh the end.” *When?* Why, afterward, for this is the force of the word in the original, as well as of the word “*then*” in our own language. “Afterward cometh the end.” How long afterward? Why, the end cometh “*when* He shall have delivered the kingdom to God, even the Father; *when* He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power.” How long will it be till that is accomplished? God knows; but however long it may be, Christ “*must* reign” till it is accomplished, “*till* He hath put all enemies under His feet,” including *Death*, the last of them all. Till then the kingdom will not be delivered up

to the Father, and Christ's mediatorial work must go on. But some blessed day, however far off it may be, He shall end that glorious work by a complete conquest of all His enemies. And who *are* these enemies? Are they poor sinful men who have rejected Him in this life? Oh, no, no; He does not hold these to be His enemies—these are his poor lost sheep—these are the wanderers from the shelter of His fold—these are they for whom He died—these are they for whom He left the glory of heaven to abide in the moral waste of this our world, for they are included in the "*all*" men. The only enemies He Himself names are spiritual enemies—sin and death and hell, and their children, shame and sorrow and despair, and such as these. Though legion in name, they are in truth all one great enemy. Any one of these names will do for all—and here St. Paul takes the central name, the one we know and dread the most; the one around which they all gather, and which most fitly includes them all—*Death*—"the *last* enemy that shall be destroyed *is death*," and with death shall also be destroyed that hell which is His creature and which "follows with Him" (Rev. vi, 8). Death is the last enemy, because now the sinful probation has ceased. Death has gathered all the harvests that sin had matured, and garnered them in his gloomy prison house of hell. But the kingdom is now to be delivered up to God the Father. Death is now to be despoiled of his prey. His prison doors are to be unbarred, for his prisoners have called on Him who is "mighty to save." The "set time is come," yea, "*the fulness of times*." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The Conqueror of the grave is nigh, the Victor over death has come. His righteous sword is ready. It sweeps with Almighty power through the air, and death is *destroyed!* Death is *abolished!* Alleluia! Amen!

Now, on the traditional dogma death will *never* be “abolished,” death will *never* be “destroyed,” for neither the one nor the other can take place *so long as he holds in his dreadful grasp either annihilated or suffering souls*. But let human dogmas be what they will, we bless and praise Thee, O Thou Father Almighty, Thou blessed Son, Thou quickening Spirit, Thou glorious eternal Triune God, that Thou hast promised, and that Thou wilt fulfill that glorious promise that death shall be *destroyed, yea, abolished* through Jesus Christ our Lord.

But we rise now to a still higher plane. To the “beloved disciple” was given the last recorded revelation from on high. He was permitted—as were Paul and some of the holy prophets of an earlier time, but “more abundantly than they all”—to see visions of the heavenly world, and to record them for our instruction.

In Rev. iv and v, we have, as we may well esteem it, the unspeakable privilege of attending the court of heaven, and witnessing through the eyes of John *the great council of the universe*, in which God disclosed the full meaning of the sacrifice of Christ. While John was gazing, he heard a voice, “as it were of a trumpet,” which said to him, “come up higher, and I will show thee things which must be *hereafter*.” “A throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne, * * * and there was a rainbow round about the throne.” And then there was heavenly worship and ascriptions of praise from the heavenly hosts, and from those that were redeemed from among men, to Him that sat upon the throne. And John saw “*in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne, a book written within, and on the back side sealed with seven seals.*”

Now, what was this book? It seems very clear that it was the *book of Christ's redemption*—the book in which the

full meaning of His mediatorial work was written down. John was apparently not yet fully acquainted with its scope as then to be displayed; and both he and the rest of our race, as well as the angels who "desire to look into" the mystery of Christ's salvation (1 Pet. i, 12), shall yet learn in future ages still more of it. The writing on the back side of the book could be read of course by all. That was the open and apparent truth that the "dead in Christ," and those who should wait and long for his coming, would be saved by Him, combined with hints and hopes of, still greater benefits to all God's creatures. John knew all this; the four and twenty elders knew all this; all the heavenly hosts knew all this. Christ had proclaimed it. John had experienced it. The apostles who had all passed away had declared it; and with more or less of distinctness had set forth still deeper truths in connection with the sacrifice of the Son of God. All this could be seen on the "back side" of the book. But oh! if these glorious truths, and the still larger hopes to which we have referred, could be seen on the back side of the book, *what* was "within" the book so jealously sealed with seven seals? Did it tell of other ineffable triumphs of the cross? Did it tell distinctly anything of those sheep that were lost! lost! lost? Did it bring their fate out into the light of heavenly day, instead of leaving it in the comparative twilight of apostolic epistles? Did it tell the destiny of the great majority of mankind, about whom John may then have had some doubt? Or,—let us ask it slowly, and with suppressed voice,—did it tell the fate of those who lost their "first estate" in heaven itself—the lost angels and arch-angels.

To these questions we can only answer as yet that "within" were "the things which must be *hereafter*."

We may vainly endeavor to conceive how John watched

that book, and what should be done with it. A strong angel proclaimed with a loud voice and asked, "who is worthy to open the book and to loose the seals thereof?" Surely some mighty being will come forward clothed with arch-angelic purities, and open those awful seals. Doubtless there was deep "silence in heaven," as on another occasion, and doubtless all watched eagerly for such a majestic volunteer; but in vain they watched—"no man in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon." Still all waited and hoped against hope, but no one came, and John "wept much because no man was found worthy to open" this mysterious book, till one of the elders came and comforted him, saying to him "weep not; the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." The elders are considered by theologians the representatives of the redeemed; and correctly so, no doubt, as appears from the 9th verse of chap. v. But neither these representatives of the redeemed nor any of the heavenly hosts could open those mysterious seals—but He and He only was worthy to do so, who was in majesty "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," and in gentleness a lamb—a "lamb as it had been slain." He alone could show the mysterious purpose of the Godhead, hitherto partly hidden, but now to be brought into the open light and proclaimed plainly to all, to the full extent of their capacity, to understand this grand result of the councils of eternity. And what was this mysterious purpose? We read that *when* this lamb that had already been slain took the book "out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne," all the heavenly hosts "fell down before Him, having *every one of them harps* and golden vials full of odours, *which are the prayers of the saints*. And they

also sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God, by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." The narrative *twice* speaks of the book as held in the *right* hand of Him that sat on the throne—betokening that the revelation was to be a manifestation of *Almighty power*.

It seems that thus far the lamb had taken, but had not opened the book, for there are no other praises than those of the heavenly hosts, and those *already redeemed*, and the cause assigned for their praise is that *accomplished* redemption. But in the 11th verse John commences another revelation, which evidently indicates what took place after the opening of the seals of the book. Now were disclosed "the things which must be *hereafter*," which John so eagerly desired to know, viz: what should be the course of this world, its sins, its wars, its famines, its pestilences, its persecutions, its death on the pale horse, and all else that should afterwards occur, till that grand final consummation, when all evil should be brought to an end, and "*Death and Hell*" should be "cast into the lake of fire. This is the *second death*" (Rev. xx, 14). Oh blessed word! the lake of fire, which is the *second death*, is the *death of death and hell!* Then John's heart must have glowed with joy and exultation. He says "and I beheld (what was in the book, no doubt), and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the (living ones), and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, worthy is the lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and

glory, and blessing." Now observe—in the first song of the elders and the heavenly hosts at the taking of the book, and before it was opened, the praise was declared to be on account of the *redemption* of the former, and these two classes alone join in it. But now when the book is opened and the glorious vista of redeeming love clears up before them (as subsequently set down in order for us by St. John in the Book of Revelations), there is no longer any room for *specific* praise, but all thought, all feeling is swallowed up in the matchless glory of the revelation and of Him by whom it was revealed. And now the elders and the heavenly hosts are no longer alone in their exultant praise. Now, in John's vision, those who were still the victims of sin on earth, and those—O wondrous truth!—those despairing ones who inhabited the dismal abode of the lost, whether they were angels or men, broke forth like the sound of many waters, shouting in unison with those already saved the song of a redeemed and perfected universe. "*And every creature which is in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them heard I saying 'blessing and honor and glory and power be unto Him that sitteth on the throne and unto the Lamb forever and ever.'*"

This was no "enforced" song. It was a joyous and exultant shout of irresistible praise and thanksgiving, from every creature in heaven, earth and hell. For let it be observed—First. The words "under the earth" are almost if not quite universally conceded by theologians to mean, as already said, the inhabitants of hades and hell; and the word "sea" is likewise held to describe a great multitude anywhere, or the infinite ether in which float the manifold works of God. Second. The inhabitants of heaven, the representatives of the redeemed, and all that were in

earth, or under the earth, or anywhere in boundless space—sing *the same song*, at *the same time*, and in *the same terms*.

We have now adduced texts that seem to us conclusive. We know what distortions of them all have been made by the traditional theologians in order to explain them in accordance with their views. We know how men (we ourselves, not less than others in all save in capacity) can read almost anything they choose into Scripture, by ingenious explanations of some things and learned smotherings of others. We present the texts we rely on in their simplicity, to speak for themselves, only calling attention to their salient points. There is scarcely one of them that can be rationally explained, if fairly dealt with, in consistency with the traditional dogma of hopeless punishment, and they each and every one conform to our view. In the absence of anything, fairly interpreted, to the contrary, either one of them is unanswerable as an authority in favor of our position. Taken together, in accordance with the principle of law above laid down, rising as they do in cumulative force, and each giving strength to the other as in a bundle of rods, they point unanswerably to the ultimate elimination from God's universe of the discord of sin and sorrow, and to the ultimate restoration of all things to the love and favor of our Father in Heaven. *He has spoken it.*

“Sing ye heavens, rejoice O earth,” the love of Christ, tender, alluring to the mind, sweeter than life itself to the heart, shall warmly beam upon the soul; and *then*, either now or hereafter, the robe of sin by which it is imprisoned—though all the more closely folded to the heart by reason of the very deadness and coldness of penal blasts—shall gladly be thrown off. Here are disclosed some of the

mysteries of Christ's sacrifice. It works moral miracles, it makes the filthy clean, the darkness light, the guilty innocent, the free will submissive—in short, it removes all the apparent contradictions and impossibilities that may be conceived from the universe of God.

“All glory be to Thee, Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, for that Thou, of Thy tender mercy, didst give Thine only Son Jesus Christ to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption; who made there (by His one oblation of Himself, once offered) a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world.” Yes, “once offered”; once *for all*; once—but *for all time*, and *for all eternity*, and “*for the sins of the whole world.*” It was conceived in the primeval counsels of the Godhead, and reaches forth throughout the countless ages of the future. All creatures in the universe may well rejoice in it, because all creatures in the universe shall reap its benefits. The highest archangel in heaven and the lowest demon in hell, each after his kind, shall in the age of ages be participants in the everlasting harmony and joy which by it shall be restored to a groaning and discordant universe.

CHAPTER IV.

OBJECTORS AND OBJECTIONS.

AT first sight it would seem strange that any human being—and especially that any Christian who loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity—should be aggrieved at any attempt to show that, according to the infallible word of God, His mercy and His justice can be reconciled in the harmony of His universe; at any attempt to show that the sacrifice of Christ, the *incarnation*, the *sorrowful pilgrimage*, and the *death of the Son of God*, have a deeper significance and a wider sweep than he had hitherto supposed. It seems indeed strange that any could be distressed to think that God, who is over all his works, and who is “all in all,” will some day establish everlasting peace; will some day bring into perfect union and communion with Himself the poor sinners who have lost their way to Him, or who have been beaten back into the misery of alienation from Him in *this* life, by the temptations of the world, the flesh and the Devil. Above all, it seems strange that men should be distressed or disturbed at the attempt to prove the sufficiency, for this end, of the *stupendous sacrifice* of the *Son of God*. One would think that any honest attempt of that sort, by a rational and pains-taking man, would be met by the “Godspeeds” of all who heard of it. Even those who had fixed opinions to the contrary formed on careful examination and deliberation, might be supposed to say, “Go on, if you honestly think so; we have failed to see it, but

if you can show it on reasonable interpretations of God's holy Word, we will rejoice with you, and hail the result as worthy of another, a higher, and a sweeter note than we have ever touched before in our songs of praise to the glory of God and of the Lamb."

Alas! alas! how different the reception which meets every honest effort to search after God, if happily he may be found, when that effort is an *unfashionable* one, or when it ventures to question the *infallibility of accepted dogma!*

Of those who thus oppose themselves to all that is not expressed in rigid formulas, there are two classes:

First. Those (in whatever church) who are lacking in the capacity or the *disposition* to consider or form independent opinions for themselves. Of this class are some professional theologians, who consider it a mortal offence that any one should fail to submit implicitly to the *ex-cathedra* utterances of their *party*, which they are pleased to call "*the Church,*" and who mean, even by "*the Church,*" only the little branch of it to which they have given their allegiance. To the creed of that party or church, be it long or short, they accord absolute authority, however it may differ from the creeds of other Christian bodies, as honest, as prayerful and as intelligent as their own. Their style is that of denunciation of all who differ with them; and they often describe even those who question the truth of some dogma of theirs, not among the essentials of the faith as necessary to salvation, as "*rationalists,*" "*free-thinkers,*" or "*skeptics.*" They never descend to consider calmly any opinions that may be expressed, or to remove kindly any honest difficulties in the way of what they call the "*orthodox*" creed (or *their* creed), for that would imply that it might *by possibility* be, in *any* point, a mistaken creed. This they will in no wise admit. They claim for

it, on the contrary, that infallibility which they indignantly deny to the Pope or the dogmas of his church. Any creed or opinion which differs from their own is, therefore, an attempt to make war on the truth of God, and its propounder is conceited, presumptuous and rationalistic.

The truth is, this whole matter of creeds is a strange and unphilosophical one. Protestants assert against Rome the freedom of private judgment in religious matters, and deny the authority of the church to lay down *ex-cathedra* a faith for all. Then, straightway, most of them (each denomination for itself, and each differing from all the rest), proceed to propound a long series of intricate and difficult propositions, the greater part of which are not of the essentials of salvation, each of which requires a long course of study for the formation of a satisfactory opinion on it one way or the other, and on which not one in ten of their numbers, whether lay or clerical, can possibly have any intelligent opinion at all. These propositions are then called a creed or confession; and all the ministers and members of the denomination which framed it are required to accept it. It is perfectly absurd that they should be expected to do so intelligently; and it is therefore equally absurd that such creeds should be made the tests of orthodoxy or of church membership. All those who accept them merely on the authority of the church, are in no better position than the Romanist, who must blindly adhere to the teachings and authority of his church, whatever error it may set forth. It is matter of every day experience, that it is one of the most difficult things to make any considerable number of persons agree on the same side of any disputed question. Juries are hung every day on single and simple issues. The difficulty increases in geometrical ratio, if there are many persons and

many issues. How ridiculous, then, is an arbitrary denunciation of any honest thinker as skeptical or wicked, because, having considered it, he is unable to agree with his critic on some one or more of these difficult and varied questions. In so far as creeds or confessions contain only the *essential* doctrines of Christianity—those generally considered necessary to salvation—they are good things. Or, if—though containing all else that is usually embraced in them—they are merely to be considered as the opinions which the church *recommends* to her members for their consideration or approval, they are well enough. But when they are made the tests of orthodoxy, they are not one whit less offensive than the dogmas of the Romish councils, or of the Pope, for both are enforced by penalties of one sort or another as if infallible.

It is of such theologians as those above mentioned that Mr. Froude (with whom we differ in many things) so well says in the lecture already referred to: They “are loud and confident; but they speak in the old angry tone which rarely accompanies deep and wise convictions. They do not meet the real difficulties; they mistake them, misrepresent them, claim victories over adversaries with whom they have never even crossed swords, and leap to conclusions with a precipitancy at which we can only smile. It has been the unhappy manner of this class from immemorial time; they call it zeal for the Lord, as if it were beyond doubt that they were on God’s side—as if serious enquiry after truth was something which they were entitled to resent. They treat intellectual difficulties as if they deserved rather to be condemned and punished than to be considered and weighed, and rather stop their ears and run with one accord upon any one who disagrees with them than listen patiently to what he has to say. * * *

They refuse dangerous questions as sinful, and tread the round of commonplace in placid comfort. * * * They repeat a series of phrases which they are pleased to call answers to objections; they treat the most serious grounds of perplexity as if they were puerile and commonplace; while it is notorious that for a century past extremely able men have either not known what to say about them, or have not said what they thought."

It is such theologians as these who have provoked an unnecessary antagonism between true science and religion. Their principles, or their lack of principle, would have made them participants in the persecution of Galileo, and in the various insane assaults that have been made from time to time upon the facts of astronomy and geology. If any new facts or principles are discovered which compel a new view of some portion of revelation, they assail them violently and denounce their discoverers as enemies of the truth of God—when in fact they are only enemies of their false interpretations of that truth. They have thus often driven honest investigators into apparent antagonism with religion; and alas! in some cases, confirmed in such a position those who without their misconstructions would never have assumed it.

If there be any system of science or of morals (and unfortunately there are some) which has for *its object* the overthrow of our faith in God, and the elimination of the Divine Creator from His universe, then let all assail it in the name of the Lord Jehovah; for such a system would reduce our race to a condition worse than that of heathenism. But let us be very sure that any system *is* of this character, before we presume to bend our bows against it *in the name of the Lord*. It is said that Darwinism is of this character. It may be so. One of the bishops of the

Church of England stated in a recent public utterance that a distinguished scientist, an advocate of that system, informed him that his object, in common with that of many others of its adherents, in supporting it, was to *dispense with a Creator*; and that this was the tendency of the system. It is folly to call any system a scientific one which has *any* object except *the truth*. If this adherent of Darwinism correctly represents its *animus*, it is a mockery to call it science—it is only a frantic form of atheism. But if we presume to *speak in the name of the Lord*, let us carefully reserve our judgments till we are sure we correctly understand the matter. Let us accept all the *facts*, but repudiate all *inferences* from those facts which leave us the prey of any blind laws of matter—for these inferences *must* be false if they deny the universal and instinctive belief of all mankind, in all ages, and among all nations, in a Divine Creator. *Facts* once ascertained we *must* accept, and if they correct our confident but ignorant and false interpretations of Scripture, so much the better. They have often done so to the glory of God and the good of man, but such facts, when fully understood, have *never* reversed thus far a single fact of Scripture, however they may have placed it in a new light. Let us never fear new facts. They, we doubt not, are new revelations from God, and as surely as God exists, they will conform to the truths of His Word. By showing our jealousy of facts, and of honest and godly investigations of the legitimate inferences to be drawn from them, we betray our lack of faith, we prove our fear that God's truth cannot take care of itself, we show that we ourselves have doubts whether indeed it be His truth. Rather let us march confidently under the banner of the Lord of Hosts. Let us *know* that in that sign we shall conquer, and that beneath its folds

we ourselves shall be made to see again, at every new assault upon it, as has been seen before a thousand times—that the wisdom of man is foolishness with God. Let us greet with kindness all honest, intelligent and conscientious efforts to vindicate the glory of God for the good of man—even though we may differ with their advocates, or they may fail in their endeavor. Let us *frown* only on those efforts whose *purpose* is to dishonor him, and to wrest from our suffering race the Divine consolations they now enjoy. Let us frown only on *enemies* of the truth, among whom may be ranked those “blind guides” whom we have described, and who, by senseless clamor and unjust aspersions, give to those enemies the best aid and comfort they can bestow.

For such objectors as these none need write, nor need it be material to any one what may be their judgment of his work, for he may assume beforehand that it will be of the usual sort. If they are right in their unreasoning adherence to prescribed dogma, and in their style of meeting difficulties, the reformation was a great mistake, and it was very unfortunate that the stake and fagot did not extinguish at once the fiery zeal of Luther and the gentler pleadings of Melancthon. No one need trouble himself about their opinions until they have settled with the Pope their rival claims to infallibility; and as it is certain he will never come to them, they should go to him, and so combine a unity of dogma to be received without inquiry, whatever absurdities it may contain.

But there is a *second* and a very different class from this, whom all must respect, but who also often oppose themselves to all that is not set down in the formulas of their respective churches. It consists of those honest thinkers who, from what we consider mistaken notions of policy,

are unwilling to disturb what has been once settled, even when they think it was settled amiss. While claiming no practical infallibility for any human interpretation of God's Word, whether made by their own churches or others, they yet fear that any revision of such interpretations once established may be perilous, even though just, as calculated to unsettle the faith and disturb the repose of the simple souls who implicitly believe. This is an amiable sentiment, and is worthy of careful consideration; but by such consideration its amiability may be shown to be its chief merit, since reason condemns it. It is, if sound, a valid bar to all progress in doctrine—all further approaches to that infinite truth whose depths we shall never fathom even in eternity. Such a sentiment, if sound, should have prevented the Reformation, the successive revisions of doctrine after the Reformation, the revision of our version of the Bible now going on, and whatever other step that may now or hereafter be taken to draw from that bottomless ocean of truth—God's blessed Word—nearer and better views of the inconceivable wisdom and love which mark His varied relations to our race.

But let us consider more particularly the various objections that may be made to a revision of the doctrine of future punishment.

And first, let us weigh the force of the objection that such a revision may disturb the repose and unsettle the faith of others, whether they be thinkers, half-thinkers, or those who do not think for themselves, but accept implicitly what is given them by those in whom they confide.

Now we confidently lay down the proposition that each man on earth and all of us together are under the solemn obligation to God to seek first, *and before all other things* to

know and make known His truth to the best of the ability He may have given to each of us. *This* we have to do, but with *consequences* we have nothing to do. God has not placed the latter within our ken, for it is absolutely impossible for any one of us to say what will be the full consequences of any act he has ever done, or will ever do, or even of any word spoken by him. Whenever men have assumed that they could and should shape their conduct by what they imagined might be its consequences, disaster has befallen them or others in the end, and the truth has always suffered by it. Look at the Jesuits. No more devoted and self-sacrificing efforts were ever made than those of Ignatius Loyola, their founder. He honestly sought the glory of God, and so did many of his followers. He and they sought it as honestly as did Paul when he persecuted Christ through His disciples. No man can doubt it fairly and intelligently. But, unfortunately, they presumed to think that they could foresee the consequences of certain acts, and were tempted, in order to avoid certain supposed evil consequences, and to effect certain supposed good consequences, to withhold temporarily the truth—just as the Romish Church now withholds the Scriptures from the laity, for fear of their wresting it—and this finally resulted in the doctrine that the “end justifies the means.” What hellish consequences have followed, in point of fact, from this doctrine, and how the truth has been buried by it under mountains of error, let history tell. No, let God’s truth appear, though it should prove every man a liar, whether he be pope or president, or member of councils, of conventions, of synods, of associations, or of any other human organization. Even on the score of expediency, it should be so; for if we are to judge of the consequences of a new view of the doctrine of future punishment or of any

other doctrine on those whose cases we are considering, we may confidently believe that it is better they should have their faith and repose disturbed for awhile, than that they should hold falsely any part of the truth of God.

Second. It is sometimes said that if the extreme doctrine of future punishment is reviewed, and a milder one is established, it will be wrested by the careless thinkers, the half-thinkers and those who desire to wrest it for any reason, and that then it will be made to mean something else, viz: freedom from penalty. The same views as those above expressed as to consequences belong here; but besides, we may fairly say that this is no just criticism of the doctrine propounded or of the act of propounding it, but is simply a criticism of human nature. What doctrine, what Scripture is there, that men do not wrest? It is the infirmity of our nature and the influence of the Devil, which render this inevitable, just as they result in every form of evil. But that is no reason why any doctrine or truth should be suppressed. If it were, then St. Paul would not have written those "things hard to be understood," which St. Peter tells us the "unlearned and unstable *wrest as they do the other Scriptures* unto their own destruction." 2 Peter, iii, 16.

Third. It is sometimes said that if the dogma of a hopeless future punishment for the sins of this brief life is overthrown, and the doctrine established that men may repent hereafter, with the hope of ultimate restoration to happiness, they will not fear to sin, but will rather prefer to enjoy all the pleasures of this life, and postpone to a future time their repentance and acceptance of Christ. And that this will be the more easily appreciated when we consider that even the doctrine of an inconceivable and *hopeless* torture in the future world is sufficient to alarm

only a comparatively small number. Again, let us be reminded that we have nothing to do with the consequences of uttering the truth, if it be truth; but as all these objections proceed on an estimate of consequences, we must answer them.

Now, we are of those who believe that it is "the goodness of God (that) leadeth (men) to repentance" (Rom. ii, 4), rather than the terrors of the law. So that even if those terrors could be made far more realistic than they are under the traditional dogma, we need not expect the chief fruits of the Spirit from preaching that doctrine, but rather from preaching the goodness and love of God. Love is almost infinitely more persuasive than fear. Even the tenderest woman who trembles at each "sudden sound or shock," will dare for love's sake the most fearful dangers from man, or beast, or nature in her wrath. And so with the bravest man. It is not because there is not sufficient of terror in the traditional doctrine to arouse men that they do not repent, for how could its horrors be increased? But men are indifferent to the doctrine, because they *do not believe it*. Our own experience is that both with intelligent and cultivated men, and with the ignorant, there is most generally an open or hidden unbelief in a *hopeless* future punishment. Hope is as much an essential part of man's spiritual nature as blood is of his physical nature. It is the very circulating principle of his soul, without which it would be no soul at all. It is the very spinal marrow of the spirit. There may be morbid or deranged exceptions, but if you call on a man healthy in body and soul to believe that there will ever be a time when he will endure a *hopeless* punishment, you call on him to believe that which is contrary to his nature, and therefore he cannot believe it. He may accept and even subscribe

to your doctrine as one which you and others think most fitting, for some reason, to be expressed in formula; but as to taking it into his healthy soul as part of his living faith, he *will not*, and *he cannot*. He will go from your side, even though he be a minister of the altar, to the death bed of one whom he and all believe to have gone down, according to the dogma, to a hopeless misery, and he will comfort himself and the bereaved ones with the words—"he is in the hands of a loving God and Father who made him, and will be just and merciful even to him." He will thus—it is done every day—admit into his own mind and inject into those of others that indestructible hope which his dogma repudiates, but which he still clings to, because it alone can comfort him or them.

Even if it consisted with man's nature to believe *from his heart* in a hopeless state, men will not believe that any intelligent and immortal creature could be consigned to it by Divine power so long as they believe that "God is love;" for nothing can persuade them that in some way justice and love will not work together with Omnipotent power for the ultimate well being of that creature.

Let God's truth be preached then without any reference to those consequences which He keeps within the sphere of His own control in a manner unfathomable by us. But we may still say that if we are to consider consequences at all in answer to such objections, it will appear that the preaching of a punishment not hopeless but reformatory will be far more effective than the ancient doctrine of hopeless horrors, which was first made obligatory by secular authority centuries after the existence of the primitive church (see Part I, chap. V), in order to control the conduct of ignorant and turbulent races, who could be restrained only by superstitions or by fears.

God indeed sets before us rewards and punishments as motives to turn to Him and live; but surely we need not exaggerate those punishments. In their real condition, they are sufficient for moral discipline, and that is their only end. Are they not? Suppose one of us should believe *in his heart* that in the course of twelve months he would certainly be hanged on a gallows unless he brought some gift mysterious and hard to find to the judge who sentenced him: would he not, like the Peri so beautifully painted by the poet, compass heaven and earth to find it? Would he not endure fatigue, hardship, heat, cold, weary days and sleepless nights with eager soul to find it? Would he not begrudge every moment lost from the search and rejoice with a joy entirely inexpressible when he found it? And why?—because he *believed* that he would thus escape a great *temporal* evil. Well, then, suppose one of us *believed from his heart* that if he did not come to Christ in this brief life, he would not only suffer the pangs which come from sin in his own experience here, but for an indefinite period after death, perhaps for many ages,—or, at least, till he should turn from his sinful state and come to Christ. Suppose he believed *from his heart* that those pangs would be intensely increased by the absence of all earthly allurements and deceptions, and by the unseen realities of the spiritual world,—alienation from God, separation from the blessed dead even of his own household, companionship with all that is unclean and abominable, remorse of conscience, and all else that we can conceive of the bitter sorrows of hell,—would not the motive be sufficient? Would not these “terrors of the law” stimulate him to all needful effort with a force inconceivably greater than that which moved him to escape a temporal punishment? No stronger stimulant could be supplied in the way of penalty—nay,

none *so strong*, for this punishment is *credible by all*; and as was said before, it is only unbelief that could deprive a future punishment of its power. That unbelief will ever be, not only a stumbling block in the way of the traditional dogma, but much more, and far worse, the universal incredulity of men as to the doctrine commonly preached about future punishment, has a reflex action, and causes skepticism as to the whole religious system to which it belongs. We believe, on evidence furnished by much observation in the general and the particular, that more men are kept out of the church, or indulge in skeptical opinions, by reason of the doctrine of a hopeless future punishment, than by any other single impediment whatever. We believe also that it renders forever insoluble the problem of the existence of evil, and produces in *all* minds a sense of unrest at its apparent injustice under the sway of an all-wise and Almighty Ruler. The Apostles' Creed is the most universally accepted of all that have ever been penned. It contains all that is necessary to salvation. Cannot the churches unite on that, and preach all that is there set down for doctrine? Their preaching would then be as comprehensive as the universal faith, including that dread bar of judgment, before which we shall all stand, both "quick and dead." But it would not contain the doctrine of a hopeless punishment—for that creed, *be it well observed*, requires us to believe in the "life everlasting," but says nothing of *everlasting punishment*.

The Episcopal Church is more liberal on this, and on all questions, than most of the others. She nowhere expressly declares or defines this doctrine, but leaves her people to draw from the Word of God their own opinions on it. She is thus liberal on every other question—for though she lays down her opinion on various subjects, by

way of guiding those who desire or seek her counsel, yet she only binds her members in baptism to "believe all the articles of the Christian faith as contained in the Apostles' Creed;" and her ministers are enjoined in ordination to draw all their counsel from the Holy Scriptures, holding as she does in her Article VI, that "whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man (whether minister or layman) that it should be believed as an article of the faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Beyond this she lays no burdens on the consciences of ministers or people; and though in her liturgy her people pray in the language of Scripture to be delivered from "everlasting damnation," yet she nowhere defines these words to mean a hopeless punishment, but leaves them to be defined by every man's conscience in the sight of God. This is wisdom. If all the churches would pursue a similar course, the Gospel of Christ would have free course and be glorified, by identification with the essential doctrines of salvation as contained in the Apostles' Creed, and by liberty in respect to all non-essentials.

Fourth. But the most common of the objections to any mitigation of the extreme view grows out of the seeming injustice that a man should enjoy all the unlawful pleasures of this life, steep himself in all wickedness and all abominations, and yet should be thought capable hereafter of enjoying the bliss of heaven in company with him who has studiously denied himself all forbidden pleasures while on earth. Now this is an objection more apparently than really just. Though it seems to be based on justice, yet its root is rather in self-righteousness and a false estimate of the sins of others.

It rests chiefly (a) on false ideas of earthly pleasure; (b) on false ideas of the comparative guilt of different sins and different sinners; (c) on inadequate ideas of the effect of repentance.

(a). Rightly considered, no earthly pleasure can be weighed for one instant in the same scale with the heavenly.

“Go, wing thy flight from star to star,
From world to luminous world, as far
As the universe spreads his flaming wall:
Take all the pleasures of all the spheres,
And multiply each through endless years,
One minute of heaven is worth them all!”

Besides this, earthly pleasures, even the best of them, are more or less mixed with sinful excess; and the worst of them are wholly sinful. In truth, even to him whom we call the good man this world affords little happiness, and that little is afforded only because it is linked with heavenly things. But he who enjoys this world for its own sake alone, is constantly deluded by the hope of happiness, yet really reaps instead perpetual unrest or actual misery. Let no one, therefore, envy him who seems to reap earthly joy, or think that he has received anything which, if denied to another, would produce injustice.

“Poor race of men!” said the pitying spirit,
“Dearly ye pay for your primal fall—
Some flow’rets of Eden ye still inherit,
But the trail of the serpent is over them all!”

(b). But the false ideas which we harbor as to the comparative guilt of different sins, or of different sinners, are still more erroneous. Men have a code of their own in regard to sin, even when they acknowledge Scripture as supreme. Sins against person and property, such as

murder, forgery, stealing, lying, rape, seduction, &c., they hold to be the most deadly and unpardonable, as well as disgraceful—for self-interest guides them in this judgment, and

“If *self* the wavering balance shake,
It’s rarely right adjusted.”

But sins against one’s self or against God, of a different kind, such as fornication, irreverence, prayerlessness, swearing, covetousness, and the like, they consider far more venial, and they cloak them with the charitable suggestion that they spring rather from weakness than from malice (as if in this respect they differed from the other class of sins); and thus they

“Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.”

Nay more, he who commits these last named sins is well received socially, and if his covetousness has been gratified by success, he is not only well received, but is honored by almost all, and is pointed out to the young as a model for their imitation, for public spirit, for enterprise, and for good citizenship.

But God’s ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. He ranks the sins that men call venial and treat with toleration among those which they call disgraceful, and enumerates them over and over again in the same lists in His Holy Word. In truth, the sin for which men have the greatest toleration—covetousness—He puts before them all in guilt, for He declares it to be *idolatry*, the deadliest sin that man can commit against his Maker.

Again, man looks at the outward sin, but cannot look on the heart, and therefore cannot justly estimate the comparative guilt of any two men, however the one may be

apparently depraved, and the other apparently moral. Moreover, he cannot understand the circumstances under which any sin or sins may have been committed. He knows not the force of the temptation, the degree of resistance, or the anguish of the fall. Hence, God, who knows all these things, forbids us, as individuals, to judge our fellow men under any circumstances; and tells us that we have neither the right nor the capacity to do so, and will surely err if we attempt it. It is an instinctive appreciation of this truth which makes us hide our sins most anxiously from our fellow-men, even when we are sure of their love for us; while we willingly confess them to God. We know that He fully understands the whole case, and is "full of compassion" for us. One who felt from experience the injustice of human judgment, thus sweetly deprecates it:

"Then gently scan your brother man,
 Still gentler sister woman;
 Tho' they may gang a kennin wrang,
 To step aside is human:
 One point must still be greatly dark,
 The moving *why* they do it.
 And just as lamely can ye mark,
 How far perhaps *they rue it*.

"Who made the heart, 'tis *He* alone
 Decidedly can try us.
 He knows each chord—its various tone,
 Each spring—its various bias:
 Then at the balance let's be mute,
 We never can adjust it;
 What's *done* we partly may compute,
 But know not *what's resisted*."

You see that poor wretched parricide, who has sounded all the depths and shoals of unspeakable iniquity and

abominations, and has now crowned a life of crime and shame by slaying the father that begat him. You know that if he is now released from arrest he will be ready to shock your moral sense, and that of the whole world, by any other crime which his abandoned nature may suggest. Do you despise him and judge him? Judge him not—*he may be in God's sight, yea, if you knew all, in your own, a less guilty man than yourself.* Are you offended at this? Then consider that his lot has been cast from infancy among depraved associates and in moral darkness; that he has had no instruction, no culture, no spiritual opportunities; and that his depravity is a growth as natural in his circumstances as the growth of his beard. Despise not the sinner, then, though you detest the sin. Rather, turn your eyes from his sad case, and cast your gaze into the dark depths of your own heart. Rehearse to yourself the secrets of your soul. You have been cultivated and watched and tended from your childhood by God's agents—your parents and friends, and His ministers. Do you not blush when you look over your past life? Have *you* never shocked your own moral sense by your vile thoughts, or words, or deeds? Would not some of them shock the moral sense of the world if they were fully known? One of the purest female writers in modern literature says what has been repeated and approved by others—that if the secret sins of thought, word and deed, of each of us, were written on our brows, each of us would shrink away from every other as from a leper; for each would see his neighbor's crimes, but would not see his own. This is a good illustration of the abysses of corruption in the human heart, and of that self-righteousness which judges others. Look, then, at your sins in this way, and then say, if you can, that you are holier than that poor, abandoned parri-

cide. Throw the first stone at him. Dare to lift up your brow, if you can, and say—"Master, this man was taken in such and such sins, 'in the very act,' and he deserves to die eternally; for he is not susceptible, as I am, of Thy great salvation." Oh! blind Pharisee; you know you dare not do so; you, and all the other judges with you, must go out one by one, judged yourselves out of your own hearts and mouths.

(c). But still worse are the inadequate ideas of the effect of repentance, though we have only space to glance at them.

You judge that poor parricide for his sins, deep and black indeed, but perhaps no worse in God's sight than your own. But suppose they *are* far worse in guilt. Suppose he is, by comparison with yourself, as odious as you think him, and that you may justly consign him to a *hopeless* ruin because of those sins—yet you cannot do so, *if he repents*. If he once takes hold on Christ, no matter how terribly he has sinned, "it is *God* that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?" (Rev. viii, 33). In that case you cannot despise him. On the contrary, if he repents, you must pity him, and desire his pardon; for no mortal can witness, without compassion and forgiveness, the painful writhings of remorse, and the tearless wailings of a broken heart.

"Who by repentance is not satisfied,
Is nor of heaven nor earth; for these are pleased;
By penitence th' Eternal's wrath's appeased."

In truth, there is much misunderstanding on this whole subject. Boswell tells us that when England was spoken of as a Christian country in the presence of Dr. Johnson, he admitted that it might be so called as having the Christian religion established in it, but not because those who

professed it generally understood what it was: for, said he, go now on the street and stop the first ten Christian men of intelligence and culture you meet, and ask them what the Christian religion is—nine in ten of them will prove by their answers that they do not understand it. It is to be feared that there is great truth in this, even at this day. Most people will speak now-a-days of “the saints,” of “the holy,” of “the righteous,” with the idea that they are describing people more or less free from actual sin, and will contrast them with “sinners,” as if these saints were not sinners themselves. But Scripture speaks of *all* as “sinners,” and *in the Scripture sense* the “saints,” the “holy,” the “righteous,” are so named not with reference to their freedom from actual sins, but with reference to their self-devotion as *strivers against sin*, and as those who, having *no* righteousness of their own, seek by accepting Christ to be clothed with *His* righteousness.

This mistake manifests itself everywhere, both in the church and in the world. Men say, “these Christians are *no better than we are*,” as if that were the test of their Christianity, instead of the honest purpose and effort to serve God in Christ, however ineffectually. They are often right in saying that even true Christians are no better than they are. Oftentimes they are not so good in a moral sense as some men of the world, even though honest Christians—by reason of differences of temperament, opportunity, temptation, &c. But at the bar of God the difference between them will be found to be, that one has repented and striven against his sins, and taken hold of the hand of Christ, held out to him; while the other has rejected that bleeding hand, and held on to the world’s hand. “Saints” are simply *struggling sinners*—witness the testimony of Paul, of John, of Isaiah, and of all the sacred writers; and many

a struggling sinner, whom the church and the world regard as abandoned, is in truth a *struggling saint*—weak, and forever falling, but repentant.

An able professional man and an earnest Christian, of peculiar temperament, fell under public and private censure, but for no disgraceful conduct. He was put “in covenant” by many of his associates. We believed him unfairly judged and unjustly dealt with, and made no change in our conduct towards him, except to manifest increased consideration for him. He fell into excess, in bitterness of spirit. More than once afterwards, he staggered up to us on the street, and with pathetic tones and tearful eyes, quoted to us an extract from one of his own poems, representing the aspirations of his soul, however he may, in human weakness, have fallen short of them.

“Be ever thus, *how'er* forlorn,
 Still fix on high thy steadfast gaze,
 Trample, in calm but noble scorn,
 On human blame or human praise.
 Then, though thy path be thunder-riven,
 Though hateful pit-falls crowd thy way,
 Still *ever trust*, and *meekly pray*,
 Thy Father—God who is in heaven.”

Do you judge this man? We judge him not. With tears then, and tears now, we confess that he may have been a better Christian than either of us; weak enough like ourselves to fall into sin, but strong enough to look to Christ in spite of his sins.

Let us cease judging others; let us recognize our incapacity to understand, far less to define in the slightest degree the different merits or demerits of men, in even *one* of the innumerable varieties of character and experience which in fact exist. We will then cease to think any man

unworthy to be a candidate for eternal life, however low he may have sunk; and we will be much more likely to consider our own ways than to criticize those of others.

Our theory, to which this last objection is made, disarms it; for that theory recognizes the restoration of *no* man, be his sins great or small, who does not "repent and believe;" and the *only* point in which it differs from the traditional view on the subject is, that it holds repentance to be possible for all sinners, in the future world as well as in this.

Fifth. The historical objection to any change in the traditional dogma has been already answered in Part I, ch. v.

CHAPTER V.

REVIEW AND CONCLUSION.

OUR task is now completed. It only remains to guard against misconstruction. We beg, in the name of justice and of that gentle charity which "thinketh no evil," and, better still, worketh it not, that no one will misrepresent our position, as if we were opposed to future-punishment, or to *any* punishment necessary for moral discipline. Should he do so, he will only increase what he may consider evil, besides weakening any fair and candid dissent from our position. Let no reader say, let no hearer think, that we have uttered more or less of doctrine than is here written down. We now record it in brief, that all we have meant to prove by the preceding pages may be seen at a glance, and we do this, especially, that if any man shall unhappily bear false witness against us his neighbor, he may hereby be convicted of having done so *wilfully*.

First. We believe in our "heart of heart," and here-propound the doctrine of "eternal" or "everlasting punishment," in the terms laid down in Scripture; but we hold it to be "eternal" or "everlasting" in the sense that it is to be a punishment "taking place in eternity," and to endure *as long as the sinful temper endures*.

Second. We believe that *by the necessity of man's nature*, he *must* be capable of repentance after the dissolution of the flesh, as well as before that dissolution,—since the capacity

for repentance is a necessary attribute of the soul and not of the body; and since the capacities of the soul can in no sense depend on their connection with the body, which is an impediment in the way of their full action, rather than an aid to them.

Third. We believe that the motive for repentance will be inconceivably quickened by the realities of the future world; and that the capacity, co-existing with a stronger motive, will stimulate to repentance *there* those who failed to repent *here* in a much more effectual manner than was possible in this life.

In this belief in the capacity of the soul for repentance hereafter, consists, we repeat, *our only real difference* with the traditional dogma.

Fourth. We believe that the Scriptures support this view, and teach the consequence, which *a priori* we would infer from it that it will *ultimately* result effectively in the restoration of all created things to the favor of God, their Creator. Thus the problem of evil will be solved by converting that evil into an eternal good.

These conclusions, neither more nor less, are those which we consider established by the preceding argument. For still further security against misrepresentation, we now also review the argument itself and present an analysis of it, in such form that its weight as a whole may be seen at a glance. Of course we can give only the skeleton of the argument, but its course and its leading points will be plain enough.

We have submitted—

First. That *life* and *death* cannot be explained by man,

but are revealed by God alone; and that they are defined as follows in His Holy Word:

(a). That life is the "breath of God," by which man was made immortal, body and soul—an immortality conferring happiness, but conditioned on conformity to the will of God.

(b). That man violated the condition, and by sin incurred the forfeiture—dying, body and soul, *the instant that he sinned*; and that this death is not what in common terms we call death—viz: the dissolution of the connection between soul and body—but a *condition of the mind or soul*, resulting in *its* immediate misery and the future ruin of the body. The man who is not "in Christ" is as dead now as he will ever be, should he even become hereafter a "lost soul"—the difference between the two conditions being one—not of kind, but—of degree of misery.

(c). That though thus "dead while he lives," his body will only return to the dust at its "appointed time," and that his soul does not consciously suffer complete misery till then—by reason of the distractions of this world, and his present incapacity to appreciate the unseen realities of the spiritual world, in consequence of the superior influence over the mind of the things that are seen and temporal, as compared with the things that are unseen and eternal.

(d). That the dissolution of the body and the death of the soul are due to alienation from the "Life of God," in whom alone we are alive.

(e). That provision is made by the death of Christ for restoration to the "life of God," which carries with it, for all who accept it before the dissolution of the body, the renewal of the soul's happiness, and its conscious rest in Christ, in the place of departed spirits, after that dissolution has taken place.

(f). That the old body being hopelessly dead, "because of sin," and soul and body *united in immortality* being necessary for one in the "image of God," a new body will arise at the resurrection from the old, as a flower from the germ, and be united to the soul in indissoluble union—both free forever from danger of another fall, by likeness to Christ and heirship with Him in glory.

(g). That those who do not accept the provision made for them in Christ, before the dissolution of the body, have no part in Him in this world, and go into the "place of departed spirits," still "dead in trespasses and sins"—*just as they were here*, and with the same conscious suffering, but intensified by a realization of their position not possible while they were on earth.

Having thus laid down on the basis of Scripture the nature of life and death, and their consequences, and shown that the happiness of the *redeemed* will endure *as long as the heirship of Christ shall endure*, the question arises whether that *condition of soul*, which the Scriptures call *death*, is capable of being changed by a renewal of the "life of God" in the soul, *after* dissolution of the flesh as well as before that dissolution.

And here commences the real issue between the advocates of the traditional dogma and ourselves.

We then submit that the "life of God" *is* capable of being renewed in the soul after dissolution, just as it is before; and that without such renewal, the holiness of God, which is indisputable, cannot be vindicated in connection with the existence of evil.

We then show that none of the various theories as to the future condition of the lost, including what we constantly call the "traditional theory," can vindicate that holiness, but that they leave the whole subject in mid-

night darkness and gloom. On the other hand, we submit, in full competition with them, our theory, as a complete vindication of that holiness. And we proceed to prove it, as follows:

Second. God's holiness—his justice and mercy—are utterly inconsistent with the *creation* of a being, *certain* to fall *immediately after his creation* (for life is but a moment in the eternal scale) into *hopeless* sufferings, "of which it is infinitely beyond the highest archangel's power to conceive the thousandth part of the horror."

And it is no answer to this to say, as Dr. Bledsoe does, that God could not prevent man from sinning after he was once created, without a violation of man's nature and His own, and the consequent working of a contradiction in *coercing a willing obedience and love*: for though this is true, he could have *forborne to create* one who would fall immediately into those pangs in spite of all that Divine power could do to prevent it.

Nor is it an answer to say, as he does, that the glory of God and of His universe required the creation of such a miserable being; for no glory could be reaped, or could be justified, if capable of being reaped, from such horrible and immortal misery of any creature whatever. But,

Third. The creation of an intelligent and immortal being—necessary by reason of those very qualities to the glory of the universe—can not only be justified in view of God's justice, but applauded in view of his love and mercy, even though he will be sure, in the exercise of his free will, to fall into sin and sorrow: *provided* a provision is made *capable of redeeming his fall*, and so *potent* that ultimately it will restore him to God, stronger than when he fell: and *provided* the suffering incurred by the delinquent is no more than necessary for the moral discipline of his pecu-

liar nature. On the conditions stated, the temporary fall will not only, as a foil, enhance his ultimate joy and glory, and make the sufferings necessary for their attainment insignificant, however severe temporarily; but those sufferings will prove to be good and only good, since they were the only means by which free-willed immortals, away from their Father's home, could attain the highest felicity of which they were capable.

That such a provision has been made, and that such ultimate security will be attained by all, appears from the following considerations, which are fully set forth, and, as we think, satisfactorily established by the argument:

(a). There is no word or text in Scripture which, *fairly interpreted*, compels the belief that there is a hopeless punishment in the world to come.

(b). There is nothing in the nature of man, or in the nature of sin, which forbids us to hope that the lost soul may repent and return to God in the future life. On the contrary, since it is the same soul, with all its essential faculties unimpaired, and since the death of the soul in the *hereafter* is precisely the same as its death *here*, viz: alienation from God—only more keenly realized, in its sorrowful consequences, *there* than *here*—it is more likely to repent there than here.

(c). This life is a probationary school, designed to educate us for another and higher life, and God our Father is our school-master. The rule of His conduct towards us in those relations is the conduct of a wise and good earthly father (as we call good) towards his children—only how much more wise and better than he! No good and wise earthly father could confine his children to one trial of their difficult duties, in one session or school, and then cut them off utterly as the penalty of one failure. Nor can

God do so. So that without the doctrine of repentance in the future life, or that of another probation, we cannot give effect to His word revealing his paternal relations to us, nor realize in its simplicity and truth the wonderful glory of our filial relations to Him.

(d). On the basis of that doctrine, all *sorrows and bereavements and losses*, all *inequalities of fortune*, all *inequalities of spiritual opportunities*, all *inequalities of spiritual susceptibilities*, all *inequalities of spiritual endowments of any sort*, and all *difficulties in respect to the existence of evil*—can be explained, and reconciled with the holiness of God. But without that doctrine, dismal and eternal gloom surrounds all these questions.

Fourth. The doctrine pointed out by these considerations is not only fortified, but *established* by Scripture texts that can in no way be rationally explained, except in accordance with it; nay, though strong by their individual force, they concur in one direction, each strengthening the other in a geometrical ratio; and thus they conclusively *establish the doctrine, which alone can vindicate the holiness of God, in connection with the existence of evil.*

From these texts we learn that God's countenance will not be withdrawn forever from His unhappy creatures who have rebelled against Him, for that this would result in their *annihilation*, which cannot be; that therefore he has provided a means by which "*all manner of sin*" shall be forgiven—"in this world" and "in the world which is to come"—*here* if the provision be accepted here; *there* if it shall be postponed to the hereafter. Hence the Saviour is described as in an *especial* manner the Saviour of those who come to him here; but as being also the Saviour of the rest in some sense. He is therefore the Saviour of these last in the next world, for as they rejected him in

this life, he is in no sense their Saviour here. In further proof of this, the Scriptures declare, in various places, both in the Old and New Testament, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess, whether of those in heaven, earth or hell; *and this He has sworn by Himself.* That this will not be an enforced, but a glad, exultant confession, appears from various texts.

That He "will (thus) have all men to be saved," appears from the fact, that He gave Himself a "ransom for all," which is to be "*testified* in due time" by the result. That result is to appear in the "*fulness of times,*" when He will "gather together *in one all things* in Christ;" for "having made *peace* (everywhere) through the blood of His cross," God will thus "reconcile all things to Himself," whether "they be things in earth or things in heaven. Nay, even the things in hell shall be partakers of this joy, for this gracious Saviour "went and preached to the *spirits in prison*" the glad tidings of that universal peace.

Therefore, "as in Adam *all die,* even so in Christ shall *all be made alive.*" But there can be no peace so long as death, the son of sin and father of hell, exists; and, therefore, not only Christ, "the first fruits," and those who shall be His "at His coming," have escaped or will escape death at the resurrection, but the whole universe shall escape death: for after the resurrection, Christ "*must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet,*" the *last* of whom shall be *death.* Then, death will be *destroyed—yea, abolished—*by being cast with hell into the "lake of fire," which is the second death.

Over this glorious consummation *all* creatures, in God's entire universe, rejoice with a holy joy that fills the ear of God with the melody of an harmonious and everlasting

homage. And so unbroken peace shall at last be established by the blood of Christ between God and his erring creatures, never more to be disturbed by sin or sorrow or death.

So it is written, O blessed God, thou Father Almighty, "therefore with angels, and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; glory be to Thee, O Lord most high! Amen!

We have now uttered what we believe to be God's truth—that evil shall not triumph over God in *any* case, but that He shall triumph in *every* case over it; and that there will come a glorious day when angels, and archangels, and men, and all creatures in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all things that are therein, shall unite in jubilant and exultant shouts and songs of praise and thanksgiving at the overthrow of all sin, and sorrow, and separation in the universe of God, and the restoration of that universe to the favor of its Creator.

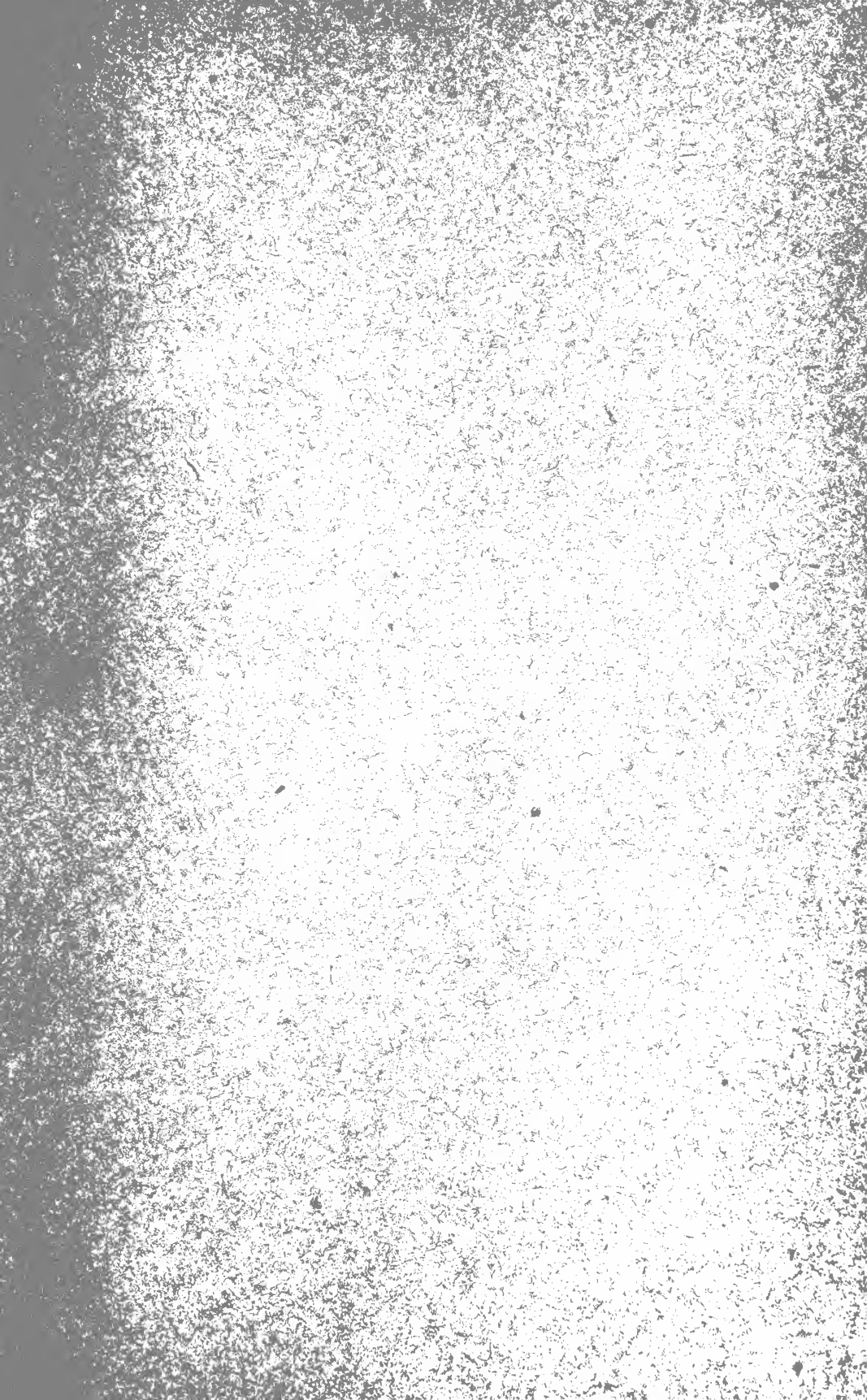
But let no man wrest what we have said—let no man presume upon it—to continue in sin; for if the affecting evidences of God's love and favor in Christ; if the "beauty of holiness;" if the sorrows, bereavements and disappointments which surround us here, are not sufficient to bring us to Christ, the discipline of sorrow and suffering necessary to that end *after death*, may *exceed all that we can imagine*, though it will at last attain the end for which it was appointed—the instruction of men and angels, and the restoration of the harmony of the universe.

Rather, let us all work out our own salvation "with fear and trembling," that we may escape the bitter sorrows of

sin in this world and the next; and so join, immediately after our dissolution, with that great "assembly and church of the first born which are written in heaven," in everlasting joy in the presence of our Saviour and our God.

THE END.





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