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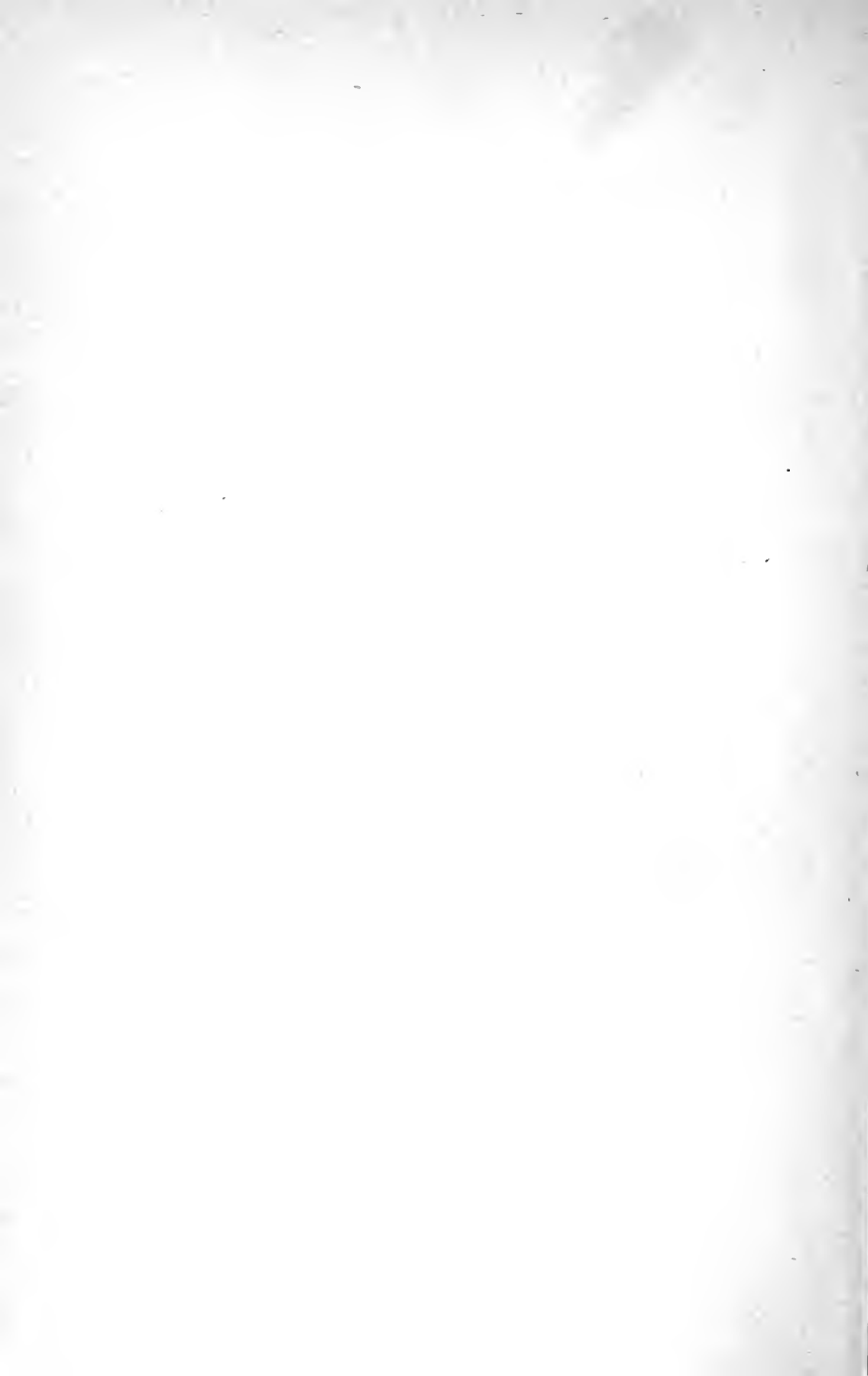
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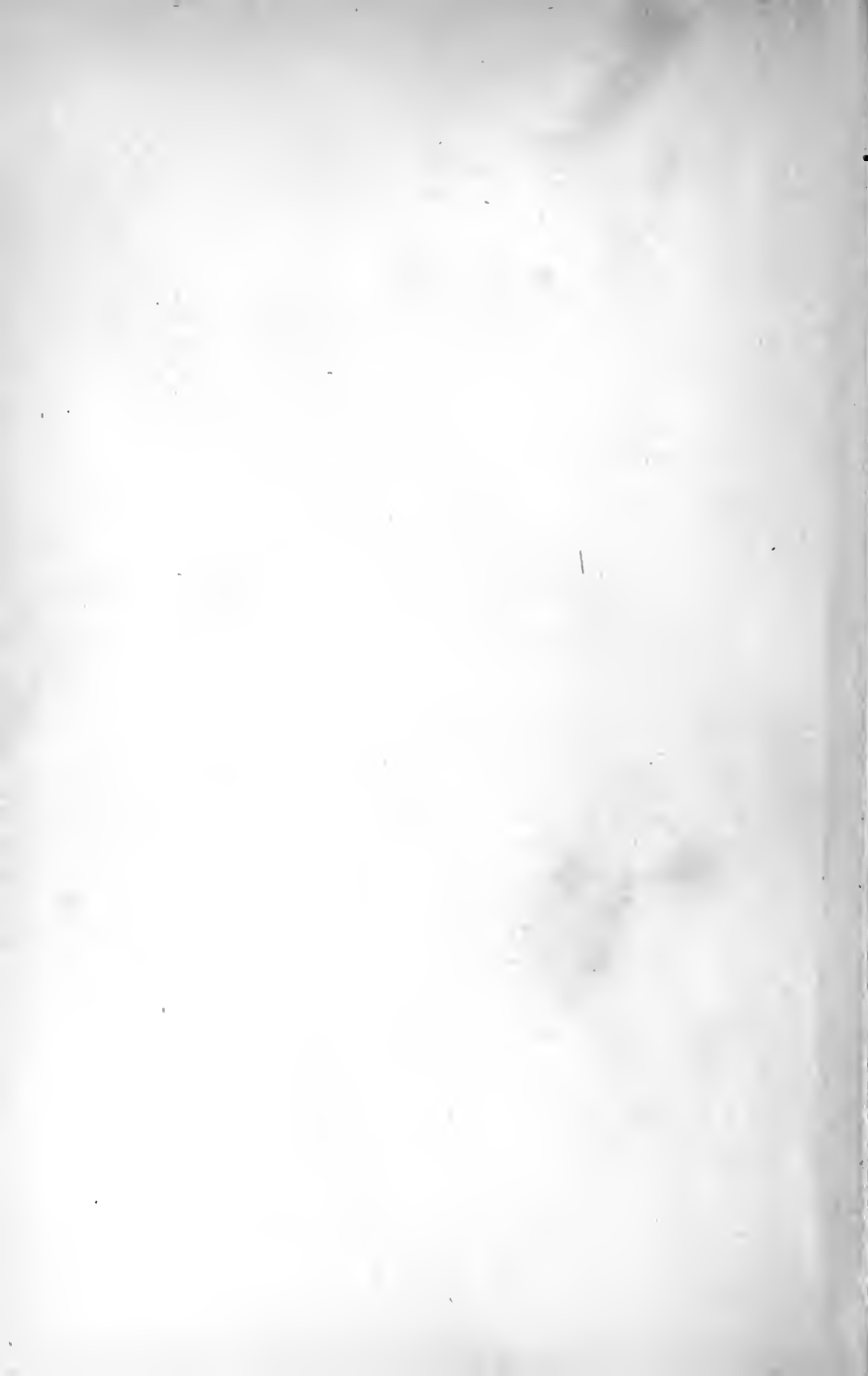
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FUTURE PROBATION:

A Symposium

ON THE QUESTION

“IS SALVATION POSSIBLE AFTER DEATH?”

BY THE

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PREFACE.



THE following papers, which have already appeared in the *Homiletic Magazine*, are reprinted in this form to facilitate reference, and in order to a still wider circulation. The subject is of the highest speculative and theological importance, and its earnest and able discussion by representatives of various communions cannot but exercise a healthy and helpful influence on religious thought.

THE EDITORS OF THE "HOMILETIC MAGAZINE."

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FUTURE PROBATION.

*A SYMPOSIUM ON THE QUESTION: IS SALVATION
POSSIBLE AFTER DEATH?*

ARTICLE I.

BY THE REV. PREBENDARY STANLEY LEATHES, D.D.

THE answer we shall give to the momentous question "Is salvation possible after death?" is one that must to a great degree depend upon our estimate of Holy Scripture, and yet more, if not entirely, upon our interpretation of it. For the question is one, which, if it cannot be answered from analogy and natural inference, can only be answered from the statements of Divine revelation on the subject. Whether we are possessed of any such statements in the Bible must depend upon our estimate of the Bible, and if we are, the answer to this question must depend upon our interpretation of those statements. Again, it is perhaps possible to have a very high reverence for the Holy Scriptures, and yet to believe that their

chief concern is with the moral rectification of this life rather than with explicit declarations concerning the life to come; and then if this be so, we shall probably decide that they have left this question designedly obscure and undetermined, in which case we shall conclude that it is one to which no answer can be given. It is right, therefore, to state at the outset that we believe that the Scriptures do contain a supernatural expression of the mind and will of God towards man, and that in consequence of this expression we do possess in them knowledge which otherwise we could not have, and which as far as it goes is absolute and final.

What sort of answer, then, do the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament warrant us in giving to this question? Nothing can be more certain than that the popular mode of reading the Old Testament is through the medium of the New, and that the popular way of reading the New Testament is through the medium of traditional and clerical interpretation. If we would arrive at the truth in either case, we must shake ourselves free from these trammels and influences. We should come to the study of Scripture as Bacon taught us to approach the study of Nature, in the spirit of childlike and unbiassed inquiry, as those who are eager to learn and willing to be taught.

The result will inevitably be to brush away the cobwebs of tradition and prejudice that have in so many cases obscured our vision and concealed the truth. For example, it will probably strike many persons as paradoxical to say that the Psalms contain very little of distinct and exclusive reference to a life to come. Prayer for deliverance from human enemies and thanksgiving for victory over them comprehends and characterises the bulk and substance of, at all events, many of the Psalms. I do not say that the Psalms are not full of the sense of sin; far from it; but sin is contemplated as a present and intolerable burden, which is its true aspect, rather than as something for which the Psalmist apprehends vengeance in a future life. In like manner the salvation, which is so frequently spoken of, is not the salvation of an endless future existence, as it is popularly conceived, but the salvation of God's present favour and grace, the consciousness of which has not seldom been brought home to him by the preservation from danger which has evoked his gratitude. "Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." And yet we naturally turn to the Psalms as being the most spiritual utterances of the Old Testament; and it is in them, if anywhere, that we should expect to find dogmatic assertions bearing upon the solution of the matter

that we have in hand. But I venture to say that if any one will take the trouble to read through the Book of Psalms with express reference to this question, he will come to the conclusion that there is hardly anything that sheds a ray of light upon it. Let us examine a few passages that may seem more or less remotely to bear upon it. Psalm ix. 17, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God." This cannot fairly be distorted into anything more than a persuasion on the part of the writer that those whom he calls the wicked shall die and not live, the very counterpart of what he elsewhere records as his own conviction, "I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord. The Lord hath chastened and corrected me, but He hath not given me over unto death" (Psalm cxviii. 17, 18). There is no word in the Hebrew language, or at least the language of the Old Testament, which expresses the mediæval and modern idea of hell as a place of torment. I do not say that it would be impossible to express that idea in Hebrew, or in any other language, but that there is no one Hebrew word to which this idea can be assigned as its natural and proper meaning. Isaiah, in another passage, does indeed put a somewhat similar thought into the lips of the sinners and hypocrites in Zion, whom he describes as

saying (xxxiii. 14), "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings." But it may at least be doubted whether the complexion which these words assume to us is that which they had in the mind of their writer. At all events the climax of the antithesis in the following verses is, "Bread shall be given him, his waters shall be sure," which can hardly be intended to have anything more than a temporal meaning, and is a beautiful and highly poetical description of secure prosperity. I do not of course deny that the latter promise is capable of a much more significant and spiritual application, which the temporal features of the description may be regarded as suggesting, but in both cases the language is too vague to allow of a rigid dogmatic assertion being based upon it. The same may be said also of another statement in this prophet which is couched in language that is associated with the doom of the wicked: "They shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched, and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." But here also the allusion to a place of future and eternal torment is precluded by the last words of the verse, which are not open to any such

meaning. The utmost we can believe that the Psalms permit us to affirm is, that the position of the writer, as one of implicit faith in God, enabled him to realise the consequences of such faith in the sense of indestructible life that it imparts; as, for instance, "At Thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore;" "With Thee is the Well of Life, and in Thy light we shall see light," and the like. Here the conviction is expressed more or less firmly and clearly, that for him who has taken refuge with and is at rest in God there can be no other portion than that of life, whether here or elsewhere; but more than this the language of the Psalms hardly seems to warrant us in saying. In fact, the revelation accorded to the Psalmist does not seem to have carried him further than it carried the latest of the Apostles, who was constrained to confess, when he looked out into futurity, "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Nor is this view in any way contradicted by what we may also discover in the Psalms of a very clear and distinct knowledge of the resurrection, as in the words, "When I awake up after Thy likeness I shall be satisfied with it;" "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and after that receive me with glory," and the like. Here the writer's faith in God enables him to look beyond the grave,

and to see that even there the principle of life which he has found in God cannot be extinguished, but must survive and be safe with Him. This is the very triumph of the Gospel itself, and the Scriptures of the Old Testament warrant the expression of this conviction, while those even of the New do not lift the veil so as to enable us to be more explicit.

Nor do I think that the language of the Old Testament anywhere is such as to give us ground to dogmatise as to its teaching about the conditions of the life to come. That the writers looked forward to the life to come I fully believe, because they laid firm and fast hold upon that eternal life which is the heritage of God's saints here and hereafter; but that the nature and conditions of that life were known to them or expressed by them, I discover no ground for believing. When David says of his lost child, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me," he says no more than any one might have said who believed that the souls of the righteous were in the hand of God. When Job said that in his flesh or out of his flesh he saw God, he gave utterance to that faith which carries with it a belief in a life after death, if not a belief in the resurrection of the body; but it was the germ only of this belief rather than anything more that his

words expressed, and they do not supply us with any adequate foundation on which to rear a dogmatic superstructure.

If, however, the language of the Old Testament is not more explicit on the subject of the life after death, it is not reasonable to seek in it for any definite answer to the question immediately before us. But there is a passage in Ecclesiastes that has often been supposed to bear upon it, and in fact is sometimes regarded as the crucial text upon the subject. I allude, of course, to the words, "In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." Now, with regard to this passage, it is manifest from the context that the writer is speaking of signs and prognostications, and of the injurious effect they have upon those who make their actions depend upon them. He is holding up to ridicule the conduct of those who wait for omens and indications from the heavens, or elsewhere, before they decide what to do, and he says if the tree or the divining staff (cf. Hos. iv. 12) is thrown so as to fall towards the south, or towards the north, all we can say is that it will just lie where it falls, and that is all it has to tell us. It is perfectly obvious that nothing whatever is predicated here about the condition of the soul after death, and we could hardly find a more striking instance of the futile and foolish way

in which the most solemn meanings are read into the merely commonplace utterances of Holy Scripture than this affords. There is nothing whatever in the context to support any thought of the popular application of this verse, and only the conviction that the Bible was a book about the soul, and that everything it says must have some reference to the soul, could lead to the belief that there was here any allusion whatever to the eternal destiny of the spirit of man. At the same time it is fair to say that what is here enunciated as a general truth may rightly enough, though not dogmatically, be quoted with reference to this matter as to any other to which it may chance to apply. I should have no objection to such a use being made of these words in relation to an individual belief as to the soul's destiny, if only it were distinctly understood and allowed that they convey no authoritative or Divine declaration on the matter. May it not be only too true with regard to the future destiny of the human soul, that as the tree is found at the last to fall, so it will for ever lie? If, however, we can discover nothing in this passage to help us in forming our opinion on the subject in hand, it is not too much to say that we shall scarcely do so in the Old Testament at large.

We must turn, then, to the New Testament, and

pursue our inquiries there. If, as St. Paul says, our Saviour Jesus Christ hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, it is perfectly evident that we shall not read the New Testament aright unless we find in it explicit utterances on the future destiny of mankind. The Lord said that He came not to destroy men's lives but to save them; and this cannot, by any sound exegesis, be interpreted merely of the natural life. In the crucial presentation of the gospel, as recorded by St. John, our Lord recognises only two conditions as possible for man. "God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And He makes everlasting life to depend upon belief in Him. Not to believe, therefore, is to perish; to believe is to have everlasting life, or to live for ever; for it is not possible to suppose that whatever may be meant by everlasting life, it can involve less than an indestructible existence. The life that we enter into when we believe in the Son of God is a life that is unassailable by death. "He that believeth in Me shall never die." The real question, therefore, is this,—Supposing that we have not entered into the possession of this life before death, is there any reason to believe that it is possible to do so

afterwards? And there are only two ways in which it is possible for us to obtain any certain or trustworthy answer to this question. One is from the express declarations of Scripture, and another is from legitimate inference and analogy based upon that teaching. Now I think we may safely affirm that as far as regards any distinct and categorical answers to this question, it is one that the Scriptures have left wholly and absolutely unanswered. That is to say, Scripture has given no sort of hint or indication to suggest the thought that the condition upon which we enter at death will be other than final. So far as it anticipates this question at all, its answer is negative; but the question is rather one that is precluded altogether by the explicit character of its statements generally. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Without any hair-splitting on the meaning of the word eternal, there is only one natural impression to be derived from this statement. Nor can it fairly be reconciled with a belief in universalism, or in the alterable character of the condition which results upon death. But even supposing that some possible escape lay hid in the intrinsic meaning of the word *αἰώνιος*, from the prospect of an unalterable and unending doom, it still seems to be asserted in more

unequivocal and absolute terms by our Lord in His memorable and thrice-repeated declaration concerning "Hell" as "the fire that never shall be quenched," "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Here it is stated, as far as finite human language can state it, that the *condition is changeless*. It is simply the assertion of a matter of fact, and is not in any sense a moral statement, the force of which may be supposed to vary with varying circumstances. Here it is affirmed that their worm dieth not, that is to say, is deathless; and their fire is not quenched, that is to say, it is not from period to period or from age to age quenched, and is absolutely unquenchable. It may be said that the adjectives and expletives are our own, but they are so only because it is nothing less than what they are intended to express that the direct and simple words of our Lord seem to affirm. No fair treatment of language so solemn can exhaust it of the only meaning that it appears to be designed to suggest. It is very true that all language may be distorted to mean or not to mean anything; but there is a right and a wrong way of dealing with it, and it is hardly possible that any use of words can be more explicit and direct than that which we find here. It is to be observed that our Lord makes use of exactly the same language

when He speaks of the life that comes through faith in Him. "He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. This is the bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die" (John vi. 47, 50); where the not dying answers to the everlasting life before mentioned.

Before considering these and similar passages in their full bearing, there is one passage that must be noticed. It is that in which Peter speaks of Christ as preaching unto the spirits in prison, who were disobedient in the days of Noah. This passage is so notoriously obscure, disputed and mysterious, that it would be unwise to build anything upon it; but we may fairly ask what is the utmost that can be made out of it in its bearing upon the question we are considering. Supposing, then, that it speaks of Christ as visiting the souls of the disobedient antediluvians in the under-world during the interval between his death and resurrection, it no doubt encourages the belief that, as far as they were concerned, their time of probation was not over, and they were reserved for the further opportunity that the preaching of Christ would offer them of repenting. It is very clear that on this hypothesis we may make thus much and cannot make less than this out of it. If Christ preached to these imprisoned spirits in this way, he could

only do so that the message of salvation might be brought home to them. They were, therefore, not beyond the reach of it, nor was it impossible for them to be benefited by it, though they were disobedient, and had perished in their disobedience in the days of Noah. We are not absolutely certain that this is the meaning of this passage, but it may be, and if it is, this is certainly what we may gather from it. But, then, is it not also clear that this incident is mentioned as a highly exceptional one? The allusion to it is unique in Scripture if we except the sixth verse of the following chapter, which possibly contains a further reference to the same subject. The case of these disobedient ones is altogether exceptional, inasmuch as we are given to understand that, with the exception of the survivors in the ark, the existing population was totally destroyed, so that there is not a similar case in the annals of Scripture of corresponding and universal destruction. It is, therefore, barely conceivable that the Scripture narrative may represent these persons as the subjects of an exceptional extension of Divine favour, though in every other instance it forbears to hold out any such prospect. Certainly what it states as having been done by Christ in this particular instance, because of the special circumstances distinctly mentioned, does

not warrant us in concluding that the like favour will be shown in every instance, or in any instance, under totally different circumstances, more especially as in every other case its utterances are explicit on the matter or it is absolutely silent. It must be borne in mind that what is said now is on the assumption that the passage in St. Peter is susceptible of this interpretation. If the interpretation is wrong, the inference drawn from it does not follow, and then, in that case, the explicit statements of Scripture remain in all their unqualified and undiminished force. The Parable of Dives and Lazarus may, or may not, be taken as bearing legitimately on the same matter, but if it is, there can be but little doubt as to what that bearing is. The great gulf fixed between the rich man in hell and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom is evidently depicted as impassable and intended to be so understood, but it is, perhaps, unfair to build dogmatic conclusions upon the representations of a parable.

It is often remarked that the same epithet is given both to the condition of life and the condition of punishment by our Lord, who speaks of each as eternal, everlasting, or the like, *αἰώνιος*, and that, therefore, if we are at liberty to regard the future punishment as anything less than never-ending, so also must we, to be consistent, regard the future

life as less than eternal, in which case we get rid, indeed, of eternal punishment, but only at the sacrifice of the hope of eternal life. We lose the fear of eternal punishment, but with it we lose the prospect of eternal salvation. I do not think there is much force in this consideration, because, allowing that the true meaning of *aiónios* is lasting for an æon or æons, and that, therefore, if the punishment lasts for an æon or æons only, the salvation must do the same, the inference that is implied is a *non sequitur* that if the punishment comes to an end, the salvation may too, inasmuch as it is surely inconceivable that a state of salvation which has lasted for an æon or æons should finally become one of perdition, even supposing it to be conceivable, which I hardly think it is, that a condition of punishment which has lasted for an æon or æons should ultimately be changed to one of salvation, its direct antithesis. The fact is, that when we attempt to bring our imagination or our reason face to face with these awful and immeasurable eternities, we are beaten back in confusion and bewilderment. We can know no more than is told us in Holy Writ, we can neither conceive nor understand as much, and, therefore, all argument or discussion on the matter is mere waste of words—a darkening of counsel

by words without knowledge. If man is a being endowed with indestructible personality, then he must hold that personality in a condition of happiness or misery, or he must hold it in a mixed condition, like the present. But if having this mysterious endowment, he is subject to the final sentence of an Infinite and Almighty Judge, then it follows that that judgment must be final or it must be delayed, as it is for the present; but if it is eventually final, it must upon the supposition be unalterable, or it would not be final.

If, however, the idea of a final judgment is contradictory to that of an Infinite and Almighty Judge, then we may find ourselves compelled to substitute the notion of purgatory for that of hell, but it will be to the adoption of a "fond thing, vainly invented and grounded upon no warranty of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God." For it is certain that that Word of God speaks of this judgment as *aiónios*, and we have already seen the difficulty involved in supposing that a condition of eternal punishment should give place to, and be succeeded by, one of eternal salvation.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that though Scripture fully recognises the fact that salvation is eternal (Heb. v. 9), yet it certainly speaks of salvation

without that or any other epithet, as though it were a simple and indestructible entity in itself, consisting, necessarily, of deliverance among other things, from that condition of punishment which is spoken of as eternal. In the same way, though, our Lord says, "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent;" yet He also says, "I am come that they might have *life*," the simple and indestructible essence which has no death in it, "and that they might have it more abundantly." Life which has no death in it, neither the principle nor the germ, must necessarily be eternal life; and it is this life in Christ, the present possession and future hope of which the Scriptures offer to us, or it is nothing.

The difficulty involved in the conception of endless punishment in a future state, depends upon the difficulty which the natural sense of justice finds in the thought of an Infinitely Just God visiting transgressions that are *necessarily finite* with a penalty that is absolutely endless and infinite. When contemplated in this way, the question assumes a form in which we can only answer it by another: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" It may be, nay, it must be, that we are not competent judges in this matter. We are not

sufficiently acquainted with all the facts. We are intruding into a world of which we have no experience, and are venturing to decide upon a condition of things of which we cannot even form a conception. Who shall say what sin involves? the forces it sets in motion, the unknown conditions it creates and modifies. If sin affects the relation between us and God, is it impossible to regard that relation as permanently affected thereby? While the consequences of sin may include the condition of punishment, to which the difficulty above mentioned may, doubtless, attach, is it certain that they do not also include such a change of relation between the soul and God, as may be permanent and cannot conceivably be otherwise? If sin is a falling away from God, and that is certainly one aspect under which the Scriptures represent it to us, is it not conceivable that the longer the falling away is continued, the more hopeless it must become, and if so, must not perpetual alienation from God involve the perpetual inability of being reconciled to Him. In this way sin, if it is permanent, and as long as it is sin, must involve a permanency of alienation as well as a permanency of punishment, and a permanent impossibility of being reconciled to God, as well as a permanent impossibility of receiving that gift of life which consists alone in reconciliation

and union with Him. The question, therefore, Is salvation possible after death? must depend upon what death is in itself. All we know about death is that it is the natural and necessary close of the present condition of things. So far as sin is dependent upon the deeds of the body, death puts a stop to such deeds; as far as the condition of probation depends upon the actions of the body, death is the close of that condition. But so far as sin is independent of the deeds of the body, which it clearly may be, there is no evidence that death puts any stop to it. If sin is, or may be, prolonged in the condition of existence after death, it follows that its natural punishment and its natural consequences must ensue. The question is, have we any reason to believe that, supposing sin to be so prolonged in the aspect and attitude of the affections towards God, the converting Grace of God will be so exercised and so brought to bear upon the sinner, as to work his repentance? It is absolutely certain that the Scriptures, as a whole, give us no ground for believing this, while it is equally certain that apart from their declarations on the matter, the question is one that we have no means of answering.

But though we may have no means of answering this question apart from the Scriptures, I am by no means so sure that they do not by analogy furnish

us with the means of answering it. The very first message of the gospel: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," if it is one that is applicable to all ages of the Church as well as to the first, clearly bases the need for repentance upon the fact that a new condition of things, whatever the nature of it may be, is about to arise. The repentance is urged because this condition is imminent. That it is imminent is the reason why it is needful. Surely we may infer naturally that it would not be needful if it mattered not whether it took place before or after the advent of that condition of things; still less, if it were a matter of indifference, as on the supposition it would be, whether it took place in the present condition of things at all. If it could as well be postponed till after the advent of the kingdom, why proclaim its need because that kingdom was at hand? Besides, our Lord's teaching frequently implies the necessity of repentance, because a final crisis is at hand, which will render it impossible. "The night cometh," He says, "when no man can work." If a man cannot work, how can he undertake or accomplish the most important of all work, that, namely, of repentance? So likewise He draws a lesson from the case of Sodom, from that of Lot's wife, from the days of Noah, and the like. It may be

said that these warnings may be interpreted of and have reference, more or less, to temporal calamity, which, to a certain extent, may be true, but then I would ask in what consists the special solemnity and awe of temporal calamity, which is certainly in these places regarded as final, except in the fact of the peremptory stop which is put thereby to every opportunity of salvation. It is unquestionably implied that, as far as the offer of deliverance and life is concerned, the calamity is solemn because it cuts off the last hope. If we could certainly know that for all men there would be a hope beyond death, it is very doubtful if we could acquit these and similar warnings of an intention to deceive or, at all events, of being given to create needless alarm. We may, if we please, affirm that our Lord was specially careful not to draw aside the veil which conceals the future, not to gratify curiosity as to what its nature would be, but we cannot say that as far as He has done so, He has given any shadow of hope to the belief that death is anything else than the close of our spiritual probation; and if, on the other hand, we regard salvation as the gift of life, then forasmuch as that life is made to be contingent upon union with Christ, personal surrender to Him, and the like, it is obvious that, for the communication of that gift

after death to be possible, it must be shown that after death it is still possible to be united to Christ, to repent and turn to Him. Now, Scripture holds out no hope of this kind, and if death sets the seal to our alienation from God, it is, at least, probable that alienation so fixed may become inherently incapable of change. As for the case of those whose condition of alienation is one of ignorance, want of opportunity, and the like, it is not for us to dogmatise about them, but to rest assured that in the hands of the Lord they are safe, and that the Judge of all the earth cannot do otherwise than right.

I conclude then, in reply to the question we have been considering, that as far as the teaching and authority of Scripture goes, we have no reason for believing that for a man dying in a condition of wilful and deliberate impenitence, there is or can be any hope of further opportunities being given him to repent, and that judging from the nature of the case a state of alienation and departure from God is calculated to increase in intensity, rather than to alter in character. While obviously, if the nature becomes more and more confirmed, it must become less and less open to reformation. But with regard to the vast numbers whose condition is one of ignorance, helplessness, lack of opportunity, and the like, it is manifest that as the general offers

and declarations of the Scriptures cannot apply to them, so we cannot fairly gather anything therefrom respecting them. Their condition and prospects are laid up in reserve among the secret things that belong to the Lord our God, and it is hopeless and useless for us to inquire concerning them. Our choice lies between purgatory, hell, and the final restitution of all things. Each conclusion is fraught with portentous difficulties, and we may well be thankful that, with regard at all events to the two last, the Scriptures do not demand our decision, that they seem to be studiously framed with the intent to withdraw our contemplation from all such unprofitable speculations, and to fix it rather on the one blessed alternative about which they speak in terms equally distinct and unambiguous, namely, the free and full offer, to all those who will accept it, of present salvation and eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

ARTICLE II.

BY THE REV. SIMEON SINGER.

IS Salvation possible after Death? The question is framed with noteworthy caution. Answered in the affirmative, it ought to unite a large number and a great variety of minds, ranging from those who are conscious of a faint whispering of hope to those who have attained all but moral certitude in regard to this solemn subject. It is evident that to say that salvation is possible after death, is asserting far less on the affirmative side than the proposition that such salvation is impossible asserts on the negative. In the latter case you dogmatically announce a final closing of the door on the other side of the grave; in the former, you do not proclaim the exact opposite; you merely give expression to the belief that, under certain conditions, the gate of salvation may be opened even hereafter.

In the Old Testament the whole subject of the state of man hereafter is touched with so light a hand that we are conscious of space rather than form, and are roused to hopes and fears which cau

no more be defined than they can be localised. Certain it is that the few passages once held to be destructive of all future hope for the sinner are no longer believed to be burdened with such a sense by many of the most competent exegetes. When Isaiah (xxxiii. 14) puts into the mouths of the sinners of Zion the words, "Who among us can dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us can dwell with perpetual burnings?" his intention is not to draw a harrowing picture of future torments, but to emphasise the idea that "only that which willingly yields itself to be God's organ can abide those flames"—"the fire of God's self-manifesting love and wrath." (See Cheyne, "The Prophecies of Isaiah.") The material figures employed in Isaiah lxvi. 24 and Malachi iv. 1-3, seem almost intentionally designed to guard against that very error into which the popular interpretation has fallen. As to Daniel xii. 2, it is all but absolutely certain that "olam" has there as elsewhere the sense not of an infinite but of an indefinite period—a view for which additional support may be derived by comparing "olam" of the second with "leolam vaed," "for ever and ever," of the third verse. Expressions like "that soul shall be cut off from its people," or, "I will destroy that soul *from the midst* of its people," imply a severance of the

soul either in this life or in the next, or perhaps in both, from those with whom to be in communion is one of its chief joys ; but they have no reference to the subject under discussion, and leave it quite unsettled. The more hopeful passages, and these are far more numerous, do also not deal directly with the matter in hand. From the mode in which they present the Deity to us, as a Being just in all His ways and gracious in all His works, they furnish us with grounds for inferring that salvation is possible after death : they do not authorise the belief in so many words. With what has been said under this head by Prebendary Stanley Leathes, in the calm and thoughtful paper in which he has commenced this Symposium, I cordially agree.

At this point, however, I hold myself free to depart from the views of my predecessor. The very circumstance that the Old Testament speaks with no certain note on the subject leaves me, I conceive, at liberty to argue it on its own merits.

I. The ethical element underlying all penalties is that they shall be either deterrent or reformative. Punishment inflicted by a moral being is intended either to prevent others, by the example of suffering, from being guilty of similar wrong, or to hinder the offender from sinning again, and so to reform

and improve him. Penalties in which neither of these motives operates, are the result of vindictiveness. Now we cannot conceive God as punishing from this last motive. But if all potentiality of salvation disappears with death, that is, if the doom of the impenitent sinner is finally and irrevocably fixed at his death, then his sufferings can have neither a deterrent nor a reformatory effect. They cannot have a deterrent effect upon other spirits—even supposing these to be conscious of the sinner's fate—because they are themselves, by the hypothesis, either among the finally saved or among the finally lost. They cannot have a reformatory effect upon the sin-laden soul, because with the death of all its hopes of salvation die also all its motives for improvement. A terminable punishment, or even one gradually diminishing in intensity, so as ultimately to offer relative if not absolute happiness to the sinner, may be conceived as fulfilling this condition; and thus the possibility of salvation after death results from the very purposes for which punishment is inflicted by a moral being.

II. From the point of view of all religion, the grand purpose of the creation of man is that he should work out the greatest attainable perfection of his own soul, and secure for it that condition

hereafter which we call salvation. As a fact, there are none who are uniformly true to this aim throughout their earthly life. Sins, varying in number and in weight, burden the souls of all. Take now any one of the worst cases. On the supposition that God's displeasure entails for the sinner irrevocable forfeiture of all his prospects of salvation, the object for which God called man into being has been thwarted. God appoints man unto glory, and man, in the exercise of his corrupt will, renders the purpose of God impossible of achievement. What an awful power is that, which on such a theory is vested in every sinner. Not only can he accomplish the destruction of his own soul, or of his soul's eternal happiness, but also the defeat of the loftiest and most beneficent aims of the Deity. Terminable suffering, suffering proportioned to the guilt of the evil-doer, would not interfere with the ultimate achievement of the Divine plan. Rather must such punishment,—if we conceive it not as vindictive but as vindicative, not as resentful but as reformative,—aid in the final accomplishment of the great scheme of mercy. But deprivation of all hopes of reinstatement in God's favour; condemnation to a never-ending banishment; or—what would seem preferable to either—the complete annihilation of any one soul negatives the possi-

bility of the Divine plan being accomplished in regard to that soul. The theory denies, or at least, it does not concede to God in another life that power He so often loves to exercise in this,—the power of turning to good the evil thoughts and deeds of man. It makes man mightier for evil than God is for good.

III. Let us approach the question from another side—that of the moral constitution of man. Wherever we look, we perceive that “faults” break the golden continuity of the noblest lives, and that gems sparkle in the dry dust of the most degraded. The notion that all men can be divided into two distinct classes, with sharp lines of demarcation separating them, that they can be confidently labelled “black” and “white,” is giving way to a more rational appreciation of human nature. There is in the members of the human family such a diversity of shading, so endless a variety of combinations of good and evil elements, that Omniscience alone can distinguish among them all. For such creatures as we are, what else can justice demand but a penalty in proportion to our misdeeds? As these vary in enormity and extent, so may the punishment vary in intensity and endurance. But the absolute reprobation of the worst sinner, his

condemnation, that is, to undergo a penalty that shall have no end, is excluded by every notion we can form of the justice of God.

Prebendary Stanley Leathes argues:—If sin is a falling away from God, is it not conceivable that the longer the falling away is continued, the more hopeless it must become, and if so, must not *perpetual alienation from God* involve the *perpetual inability of being reconciled* to Him? But here it is evident that “perpetual” is used in two senses that differ as widely as the span of human life differs from eternity. How are we to balance the one against the other? Even a life of unmitigated sin, if such a thing were possible—seventy or eighty years of continued rebellion against God’s will, would not be fairly met by an everlasting banishment from His love. No human life, no conceivable extent of time bears any proportion to eternity. But while such a case is purely supposititious, lives in which virtue and vice are mingled in endless complexity, are facts to which experience everywhere testifies. “Between the lowest saint who is saved, and the most amiable sinner who is lost, the difference must be very slight, yet the difference in their destinies is infinite.” If there be such a consequence attached to sin as the forfeiture of all chance of salvation hereafter, have we not,—

we who by our very natures are never entirely free from sin, seeing that "there is no just man on earth who doeth only good and sinneth not,"—have we not a right to know at what stage of evil-doing our condemnation passes from temporary and partial to eternal and total loss of salvation; have we not a right to know this at least as clearly as we know what the offences are for which a human tribunal exchanges its milder penal inflictions for the irreversible penalty of death? Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice? Shall He inflict a punishment which, in regard to its chief issue, is absolutely indiscriminating and irreversible? If this were so, what a terrible fate would await the best of us in that death from which we cannot escape! What an unspeakable misfortune that life would be which was none of our seeking! It is well that such a gloomy doctrine should have the light of day cast upon it; for it is one which, in the pregnant words of the Jewish philosopher, "has rendered almost as many men practically wretched in this life, as it theoretically damns in the next." (Mendelssohn's "Jerusalem," 106, 1st Edition.)

What are the arguments by which these conclusions are met?

1. It is contended that we have no right to bind

God with human cords; to assign to Him an ethical system which happens to be in vogue among mortals; to measure His standard of justice and mercy by our own. I reply that I have nothing else to guide me but the standard which reason, and the Scriptures interpreted by reason, afford. If I am not to hope for endless mercy as the ultimate fate of the sinner, because God's ways are not our ways, and His thoughts not our thoughts, may I not for precisely the same reason refuse to fear that endless misery will be the sinner's destiny? Why shall I assume that because in these transcendent matters God judges not as man judges, therefore His treatment of the sinner is more likely to be in the direction repudiated by my reason than in that which commends itself to the only faculty for measuring abstract right and wrong which God has endowed me with?

2. The impenitent sinner deserves endless punishment, because he has consciously and deliberately rejected the endless mercy of God.—The argument melts away beneath a single ray of common sense. How can a man reject "endless" mercy? If endless mercy be withdrawn from him in consequence of such rejection, it ceases to be "endless:" it never was "endless." He has no more power to stop the flow of endless mercy than to stop the

action of the law of gravity ; he can no more withdraw himself from it, than he can withdraw himself from the universe. Try as he will he cannot reject it ; it clasps him, though he tear himself from it ; it discovers him, though he hide himself from it ; it saves him, spite of himself.

3. The alienation of the soul from God, implied by a life of unrepented sin, is a state in regard to which the only change antecedently probable is an aggravation of its worst characteristics. If a soul has continued through life in sin and quits it in sin, it has given itself an impetus that is only likely to increase in velocity as time passes into eternity, not to alter in direction.—This difficulty is stated with much force at the conclusion of Dr. Leathes' paper. "Judging from the nature of the case, a state of alienation and departure from God is calculated to increase in intensity, rather than to alter in character. While obviously, if the nature becomes more and more confirmed, it must become less and less open to reformation." But is the inference drawn from these data unassailable ? If repentance is possible at any stage of an iniquitous life ; if, notwithstanding the accumulating obstacles to a return to God offered by endurance in sin, the recuperative powers of the soul do often triumphantly assert themselves ; if, at the very

time when vitality is ebbing away, it has been known to put forth its noblest efforts in a death-bed repentance, why are we to conclude that after death the soul, in its essence undestroyed and indestructible, shall be able to exercise all its spiritual functions *except that of repentance alone*? As a believer in personal immortality, you admit that, after the death of the body, the soul is conscious, employs memory, is sensitive to spiritual pain and pleasure, can grieve and rejoice, can even feel regret and contrition. One thing alone it cannot do,—it cannot repent. Its powers come to an end when it reaches the border-land between remorse and repentance!

4. Must not the moral effects springing from the promulgation of a belief in the possibility of repentance and salvation after death be most pernicious? It gives an air of unreality to the most solemn exhortations of religion. The sinner will say, “The secret is out; I have another chance; it is indifferent where and when I repent.”—I confess I am unaffected by such imaginary alarms. For may not an objection of the same nature be urged against the doctrine of repentance in this life? If to hold out the prospect of repentance hereafter is a tampering with the duty of repentance here, then the admission of the efficacy of repentance here is a

tampering with the gravity of sin itself. May not the sinner abuse his priceless privilege, and say, "Since the return is open to me at any moment of my life, for the present I will throw myself into the full stream of sin, and leave the backward journey to another time?" Yet all religions know how to meet such a perverse attitude of the mind, if it ever displays itself, and every one feels that there is nothing unreal in any religion that condemns sin, and at the same time preaches the saving power of repentance. The main thing is, after all, to keep alive the conviction that justice will be done to the worst as to the best. There is far more danger, I venture to submit, to the cause of true religion, in dogmatically maintaining a position against which our sense of justice, as God Himself has implanted it in us, revolts, than in clinging to the hope that, when the penalty has been paid, and the afflicted soul regrets its evil-doings, and yearns for reconciliation, the Lord will not cast it off for ever, because "though He cause grief, He will have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies."

Thus far I have been considering this question apart from all special theological bias. It may, however, prove a not uninteresting contribution to the discussion to give a *résumé* of some of those

Rabbinical teachings which have helped to shape the belief now entertained by the bulk of my co-religionists. It must be admitted that the Rabbins, as a body, were not "universalists." Yet many and striking are the indications to be met with in the Talmud and Midrashim of a desire to soften the terrors of the popular conceptions concerning the Hereafter, and to breathe the spirit of hope into all who are destined to pass to judgment through the dark portals of the grave.* Apart from repentance, the effect of which is irresistible even in *articulo mortis*, salvation after death is rendered possible by—

- I. The sufferings of the sinner on earth.
- II. His death.
- III. The purging of his offences in Gehinnom, and the soul's unexhausted faculty of repentance.
- IV. The prayers and pious works of survivors.
- V. The intercession of beatified spirits, and
- VI. The saving mercies of God.

I. The sight of all intense forms of human misery suggested the thought that for those who

* Our acknowledgments are due to the Ven. Archdeacon Farrar for the valuable work he has done in the field of Rabbinic Eschatology, both in "Eternal Hope," in "Mercy and Judgment," and in special articles on the subject.

are so severely afflicted on earth, the end of life must be beginning of bliss. It is in accordance with this idea that the Talmud (Erubin. 41*b*) remarks that three misfortunes exempt men from the sight of Gehinnom—grinding poverty, certain forms of disease, and subjection to tyrannical rule. The judgment upon the generation of the Deluge lasted twelve months; they underwent their sentence, and have thus a share in the world to come (Bereshith Rabbah, chapter 28). If the loss of a tooth or an eye brought freedom to the slave, how much more so will afflictions that purge of sin the whole body of a man (Berachoth 5*a*). R. Shimon ben Jochai said, “three great gifts the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Israel and each of them, by means of affliction—the Law, the land of Israel, and the world to come (Ibid.). R. Nehemiah said, “as sacrifices expiated for sins, so do afflictions” (see Lev. xxvi. 41). Nay, the latter are more efficacious than the former (Tanchuma on Jithro). “By means of suffering men pass to the life to come” (Bereshith Rabbah 9).

II. Death provided an atonement for sin. “All who die expiate their offences by death” (Sifre 33*a*). One who had been condemned to execution protested his innocence in this way: “If I have done this deed for which I am now condemned, may my

death be no atonement for all my sins ; but if I am guiltless of this crime, then may my death be an atonement for all my sins (Sanhedrin 44*b*). The latter phrase seems indeed to have been a common formula (Berachoth 60*a*). The more aggravated the circumstances accompanying death, the more complete and certain was the expiation. Korah and his confederates, as well as Achan, have a share in the world to come (Bamidbar Rabbah 18, and Tanchuma on Vayesheb). R. Nathan said (Sanhedrin 47*a*), "It is a good sign when punishment comes upon a man in death itself: if he perish and none lament and none bury him ; or if a wild beast tear him, or rain drop upon his bier—all this is a good sign for him"—"for thus atonement is obtained for him" (Rashi). Bereshith Rabbah 65, relates how Jakim, a nephew of José of Zeredah, as a penalty for breaking the Sabbath, pronounced and carried out his own sentence of death ; and how José beheld in a dream the coffin of his nephew hovering in the air, and exclaimed, "In an easy hour he has preceded me in finding entrance to the Garden of Eden." The legendary character of the narrative does not affect the belief of which it is a very striking expression. "Death the Liberator" was a conception not unfamiliar to the Jewish mind ; but it there became a chief agent in

man's spiritual discipline, and it was valued, not as the last refuge of physical or moral cowardice, but as one form of atonement for human sin, and a consequent deliverance from some of its most dreaded results. Bearing in mind the instinctive love of life in all men, and the unwillingness with which, as a rule, they part from it; the mysterious and unfathomable change wrought by death; the agonies that often accompany the severance of the lifelong partnership between body and soul; the vast possibilities of suffering with which, unperceived by lookers-on, both memory and anticipation may afflict the departing soul, it was hard to believe that even for the sinner death was all loss, or, what is worse,—only another stage forward to a state of misery, immeasurable in intensity and endless in time.

III. The doctrine generally prevalent in regard to the relation of this life to the next was that expressed in the words: "To-day is thine to do God's precepts, to-morrow to receive thy recompense for them." "This world is the vestibule, the next the banqueting chamber. Prepare thyself in the one, that thou mayest enter the other." But if this duty had been neglected, it was not denied that the soul, after having acquiesced in the judgment pronounced upon it, and undergone its just

penalty, might by the aid of contrition (which, with its other spiritual faculties, was indestructible), obtain restoration to the Divine favour. The idea of eternal punishment for temporary wrongdoing, was repellent to the native sense of justice of the Jew. "The period of the judgment upon sinners in Gehinnom is twelve months" (Adoyoth, ii. 10). In Erubin 19a, one view is expressed to the effect that transgressors can repent at the gates of Gehinnom. In the Othioth, or Alphabet of R. Akiba (Oth Cheth), we read: The sins of the wicked of Israel are accounted to them as righteousness when they look upon the face of Gehinnom and submit themselves to its judgment. And when they are rescued thence and return repentant to the Holy One, blessed be He, they are forthwith received by the Shechinah even as the just who have not sinned, as it is written—Ezek. xxxiii. 19—"When the wicked turns from his wickedness and does that which is lawful and right, he shall live *with them*" (the preposition 'al is here used, which has sometimes the force of "together with," or "in addition to," as in Gen. xxviii. 9, and Ex. xxxv. 22), that is, he shall live with the righteous and the perfect, the men of faith and good works in the world to come. And not this alone; but such penitents shall be uplifted and seated near the

Shechinah, because they have humbled their heart in contrition before Him, as it is said, "The Lord is near to the broken-hearted."

For the sake of one ardent "Amen," streaming from the soul of the sinners in Gehinnom, they shall be delivered from their agonies. When the voice of Zerubbabel shall sound throughout the world in sanctification of the Divine name, the sinners of Israel remaining in Gehinnom shall respond "Amen," and confess the justice of their fate. Instantly the mercies of the Holy One, blessed be He, will be moved towards them exceedingly, and He will say, "Why should I punish them still more? It was 'the evil inclination' that caused them to sin." (Jalkut on Isa. xxvi., Elijah Zutta, xx.)

"God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good"—that is, both Paradise and Gehinnom (Midrash Koheleth). As the praises of God rise from the just in the Garden of Eden, so also do they rise from the wicked from Gehinnom. The sinners cool Gehinnom with their flowing tears (Shemoth Rabbah 7). Why did God create Paradise and Gehinnom? That the one might deliver from the other. What is the space between them? R. Jochanan says, it is but the width of a wall; רַחֵם that of a span. Others, two fingers'

breadth (Midrash Koheleth). It was under such figures as these that the Rabbins taught that it was not an impossible thing to pass from a state of reprobation to a state of bliss; that as the spirit still lived, divorced from the body that bound it to earth and earthly frailties, it might continue, in its disencumbered state, to perfect its way; that the idea of future punishment, most consonant with the character of God and the wants of man, was that of a state which led through great but limited suffering to ultimate and unending blessedness; and that there was no place where God holds sway which would have borne such an inscription as that over Dante's Inferno—"All hope abandon ye who enter here." *

IV. The prayers and pious works of survivors are capable of affording relief to the departed soul in its state of punishment. The remarkable passage in 2 Macc. xii., is a testimony to the antiquity

* The punishment of "Careth" excision, says Abarbanel (Commentary to Numbers, section Shelach), may include a physical and a spiritual penalty,—a physical in this world, in that the life of the sinner is prematurely cut short; a spiritual in the life hereafter, in that the soul after its separation from the body will be kept at a distance from the brightness of the Shechinah, and from those higher influences which are enjoyed by the spirits that merit to partake of the bond of life. This punishment is called "a cutting off," a metaphorical expression implying that just as a branch is cut from a tree from which, while attached to it, it derives vitality and susten-

of this belief and the fervour of conviction with which it was held. The same conviction is implied by the recital of the Kaddish by orphans. It underlies also the "Hazaroth Neshamoth," or Souls' Memorial Service, in which entreaty is made that God may in His mercy remember the souls of departed kindred and friends, that they may be bound up in the bond of life and their rest may be glorious, while the supplicant himself gives proof of his sincerity by acts of practical beneficence. Study of the Law has likewise a redemptive force. (Zohar to Lech Lecha. See Nishmath Chayim, ii. 27). "It is written, 'Pardon Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed' (Deut. xxi. 8). The first sentence speaks of the living, the second of the dead. The living can redeem the dead. Hence we are accustomed to make mention of the dead on the Day of Atonement, and to appoint a sum to be given in alms on their behalf. For thus have we learnt in Torath Cohanim, that

ance, so will the soul be cut off from the bond of celestial life, and not receive the Divine glory—the true spiritual bliss and recompense. But this does not constitute a total deprivation or absolute loss for the soul, which, being a spiritual self-existent substance, is indestructible. "Careth" is a great pain and punishment for the soul, of which it will receive more or less (according to its deserts), and after having undergone its penalty it will inherit Paradise and bliss. "There is hope of a tree, if it be *cut down*, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease."

even after death charity availeth as a means of redemption. The troubled soul is then raised from its suffering, swiftly as an arrow is shot from the bow; it is cleansed as on the day of its birth. It partakes henceforward continually of the tree of life, planted in the region of the righteous; itself becomes righteous and lives for ever." (Tanchuma to Haazinu.)

The passionate yearning to save those whom we have loved and lost is not without its effect, teaches the Talmud. Those whose own merits are too weak to plead for them are sometimes saved by the intercession or for the sake of others more worthy than themselves. Thus the renegade Elisha *b. Abuyah*, "The Faust of the Talmud," is saved from perdition by his pupil, R. Meir (*Jerus Chagiga 5b*); Antoninus Pius by R. Jehudah the Holy (*Abodah Zarah 10b*); the executioner of R. Chananyah *b. Teradyon* by the martyr himself (*Abodah Zarah 18a*); and a captain of Turnus Rufus by R. Gamliel (*Taainth 29a*). (See notes of Schlessinger on *Ikkarim*, p. 679.) Upon the pathetic words uttered by David when he hears of the death of Absalom, the Talmud (*Sotah 10b*) comments: "Eight times is the cry repeated, 'My son.' The rebellious child of David had been cast into the lowest of the seven grades of Gehinnom. But with each invocation

the broken-hearted father lifted him a stage out of his misery, and with the last drew him into heaven."

I am aware that in many quarters strong objections are entertained against "prayers for the dead." (1.) It is felt that to pray for the suspension or mitigation of the penalties of the soul that has gone to its account, is to challenge the Divine sentence and to seek to interfere with the course of Divine justice. I answer that the same objection may be raised against all entreaties, as well as against other more direct personal efforts to lessen the sufferings of sinners on earth, when their punishment has been the just recompense for their misdeeds. All prayer, in so far as it is specific, looks for some response in the natural sense of the petition, although it is true that response may also be given in a higher sense, by an inflow of spiritual strength and comfort. If God was not displeased with the patriarch who wrestled in prayer for the sinners of Sodom, nor with the "man of God" who pleaded for pardon for his erring people, if these efforts involved no improper intervention with the action of God's just decree, it is difficult to see why there should be anything contrary to the Divine desire, or outside the proper scope of human entreaty in prayer on behalf of the soul

awaiting or already enduring its merited punishment.

Against the practice of praying for the departed, it is contended—(2.) That it is useless, because their earthly life having come to a close, nothing that the survivors can say or do will affect them. I reply, what right have we thus to limit the power of prayer? If there be any efficacy at all in words poured from the full human heart into the listening ear of God, shall we say that it has vanished when the object of our prayer is nearer to God than ever before, when the spirit has returned to Him who gave it? All our best prayers are for others, not for ourselves. Can we feel that prayer is of avail when offered for the sick child, for the dying parent, for the life of the sovereign and her counsellors, for those that are in peril on land and sea, even for the soul of some beloved being, beset by temptations in its earthly career,—but that for the soul that has quitted its temporal abode, perhaps called suddenly hence, never, even after the longest and loudest warnings, fully prepared,—for *it* all our prayers are vain and self-deceiving? Unless we are prepared to maintain that at his death the fate of man is fixed irretrievably and for ever; that therefore the sinner who rejected much of God's love during a brief lifetime has lost all of it eter-

nally, prayer for the peace and salvation of the departed soul commends itself as one of the highest religious obligations.

V. That the bliss of the just in heaven must be overshadowed by the consciousness of the sufferings being endured in hell, is a thought that occurs to every mind which has formed a lofty ideal of happiness. What joy can heavenly spirits feel while they are aware that those who once were bound to them by the tenderest ties of love or the strongest bonds of friendship, with whom to be reunited is the all but universal hope of believers in immortality, are condemned to have the gates of hope for ever shut against them, and to pass eternity in nameless torture and remorse? There, where all hate is extinct, can there be any satisfaction in the unending torments of evildoers? Can there be any perfect peace above while there is infinite despair below? Must not the knowledge of the agonies endured without prospect of cessation by even one of their own species, quench every spark of joy in the assemblage of the blessed, and impel them with one accord to petition the God of mercy in language like that of the inspired law-giver: "And now if Thou wilt forgive their sin,—but if not, blot me out, I beseech Thee, from the book which Thou hast written!"

It is said in Midrash Koheleth, that in the fullness of time many parents and children will be found reaping the reward of their actions—these among the righteous, those among transgressors. At the sight of the wretchedness of their parents the children will burst into tears, and will implore the Almighty Judge, “Restore our parents to us.” And the Holy One will answer, “Your parents have sinned and deserve not to join you.” And the children will reply, “If we have merited the compassion of God, let our parents be given us again.” Then Elijah the Prophet will arise, and plead their cause, saying, “Here are the guilty, and there the innocent. May mercy prevail over wrath!” And the Lord will turn to the children and say, “You have spoken well for your parents: they shall be restored to you.”

VI. But far more effectual than all these agencies is the boundless compassion of the Most High, who “retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy,” who, though He forsake the sinful for a brief moment, gathereth them again in great compassion. In Sabbath (S9b) occurs this beautiful passage. Quoting the words of Isaiah (lxiii. 16), “Surely Thou art our Father: though Abraham will not know us, and Israel will not recognise us. Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our

Redeemer from eternity is Thy name;" the passage continues: "In the future life, when God sits in judgment upon His creatures, He will turn to Abraham and say, 'Thy children have sinned.' And Abraham mournfully assenting will answer, 'They must be blotted out, for the sanctification of Thy name.' So too will Israel answer. But Isaac intercedes on their behalf, and the sinners of Israel look up to him and say, 'Surely thou art our father,' then he, directing them to the Holy One, blessed be He, says to them, 'Praise Him, not me; He is your Father.' And raising their eyes on high, with one voice they exclaim, 'Yea, though Abraham will not know us, and Israel will not recognise us, Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from Eternity is Thy name. Whom have we left but Thee?'" "When God hears them pleading thus, He replies (Ibid.), 'Since it is upon My mercy you throw yourselves, behold, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.'"

One other illustration may be given of the breadth of view and the tenderness of spirit manifested by many of the Rabbins in the treatment of this difficult subject. It is found, with slight variations, in *Shemoth Rabbah* 25, in *Tanchuma*

and in Jalkut. At the hour when Moses stood before God on the mount, the Holy One, blessed be He, showed him all the treasures of recompense prepared for the righteous. Looking at one, Moses said, "Whose treasure is this?" "It is for them that study the Law." "And this?" "For them that lead a just life." "And this other?" "For them that adopt the orphan." So he questioned and was answered regarding every store. Then beholding one larger far than the rest, he inquired, "For whom is this designed?" And the Lord answered him, "He that hath merits of his own, to him will I give of his own recompense. And he that hath none, with him I will deal mercifully for nought, and give him of this treasure. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious (not only to him to whom recompense is due), and I will be merciful to whom I will be merciful."

ARTICLE III.

BY THE REV. DAVID MACEWAN, D.D.

BEFORE answering this question, it is very desirable to have a clear understanding what it means. The question is not as to the ultimate doom of the unsaved: but whether their probation, or opportunity of being saved, terminates at death. We must not, therefore, confound the question with that of everlasting punishment. I might hold that opportunities for salvation after death shall be afforded, and yet believe that in the case of all who fail to improve this prolonged probation it shall terminate finally either in everlasting punishment, or not in punishment but annihilation. There is undoubtedly a view of the everlasting condemnation of the wicked which bears very directly on the question before us. To this I will by and by have occasion to refer. But it is well in the outset to see that the two questions are not necessarily identical, and that attention should in the first instance be limited to the inquiry simply—Is salvation after death possible?

The answer to this question must depend largely, on the view taken of the Holy Scriptures as an authoritative rule of faith. Those who regard the inquiry as one to be determined by their own reason, or who accept the teaching of Scripture only so far as it commends itself to their human judgment, assume ground so different in dealing with this, and kindred questions, from those who hold the Bible to be the Word of God and the supreme standard of faith, that they can hardly be expected to arrive at the same conclusions. We have no other guide, in my opinion, respecting possible salvation after death but the revelation which God has given us. It is not to human reason that we owe the knowledge that there is a future life; and the same Divine Word which has revealed this to us must also be our instructor regarding the possibilities which belong to it, and the conditions on which final happiness in that life can be secured.

In approaching the Scriptures on this question, we must be careful not to demand too much. The Bible is designed as a rule of faith and conduct for those to whom it is sent. It is not a repository of information of a speculative kind concerning the final condition of those to whom it has never come, or the principles on which the all-wise Judge shall

finally determine that condition. So far as the possibility or impossibility of our own salvation after death is of practical importance to ourselves, in relation to present duty and responsibility, we to whom the Word of God has come may surely expect from it sufficient light to guide us. And even with respect to others who do not possess the Scriptures, we may reasonably look for some direction, so far at least as the question has a practical bearing on our obligation to send them the gospel. Beyond this, however, we must not be surprised if the Scriptures maintain a dignified reserve or even silence.

On the other hand, it would be strange if the Word of God, professing as it does to deal with man's eternal interests, afforded no grounds whatever for arriving at some definite conclusion on a question so momentous. In certain aspects it is very emphatically a practical one. The possibility of being saved after death cannot fail to have a most important bearing, both on the urgency with which the gospel ought to be preached, and the responsibility resting on all who hear it. To men as moral beings the difference is so vast betwixt having the opportunity of salvation limited to this life and having it extended into the life beyond, that it can hardly be imagined that God, in giving

them a revelation of His will, could leave them on such a point altogether in the dark. We may not be entitled indeed to look for direct statements, provided the teaching of Scripture in general be sufficiently explicit. But in view of the terrible danger, of men trusting to opportunities of being saved in a future life to the neglect of those of the present, only to discover too late that they have been self-deceived, one would expect in the event of salvation being really possible after death, that this will be made known in no vague terms, but in language so clear and unambiguous as to guard them against mistrust, which would be disastrous and irremediable.

Now, *taking the teaching of Scripture as a whole*, there can be little doubt, I think, that it leans very decidedly towards the conclusion that moral probation is limited to the present life. Without referring to the salvation of infants dying in infancy, or the salvability of many who have never had the opportunity here of rejecting the gospel, but have acted up to the light they possessed, and concerning whom in the absence of express revelation one may fairly suppose, that their salvation takes place *at* death rather than after it, I am of opinion that the impression left on the minds of ordinary readers of Scripture must be, that for all who wilfully refuse

God's offer of mercy here, there can be no hope of salvation in the life beyond. Vague as the teaching of the Old Testament is alleged to be on this subject, it is surely a fact of much significance, that the Jews did regard the present as a probationary state to be followed by one of rewards and punishment. There are statements in the Old Testament whose precise meaning it may not be easy for us to determine; but read in the light of the prevailing sentiment of the ancient Jewish Church, and in the clearer light of the New Testament interpretation of them, it is evident that passages in the Old Testament writings which, taken by themselves, seem obscure to us, were, with the help of inspired men, understood by the Jews in a much more definite sense than we may now think them capable of bearing. According to Jewish opinion, formed by the teaching of the Old Testament Church, the souls of men passed at death into "Sheol;" but this unseen state was undoubtedly regarded as comprising two conditions, corresponding to the Tartarus and Elysium of the Pagans, the one for the wicked, the other for the righteous, and there is certainly no evidence from the Bible that these conditions were believed to be other than final. In Rabbinical writings and the Apocrypha countenance is no doubt given to praying for the dead, and this

is pointed to as a proof that probation was not held by the Jews as terminating at death. But not a single passage in the Old Testament gives the slightest countenance to this practice. The Apocrypha, however valuable in many respects, is not to be classed with the inspired writings. Rabbinical comments on Old Testament Scripture can have little weight, as authoritative expositions, with those at least who know and believe in the denunciatory testimony of Christ concerning them. And if praying for the dead ever prevailed to any great extent among the Jews it must be classed with the corruptions which crept into their Church in the later periods of their national history; and it was certainly not derived from any precept or example given them in their sacred Scriptures. The general bearing of Scripture, however, on the question before us, may be gathered still more fully, from the interpretation put upon the Word of God by the great majority of the Christian Church. That an opinion is "orthodox" does not by any means ensure that it is correct. But the fact entitles it to consideration. It shows to what conclusion a vast number of minds have been led, through the ordinary reading and study of the Word of God. Now with regard to possible salvation after death, everyone must admit that, with exceedingly few excep-

tions, the universal opinion of Christians throughout the whole of the Christian era has been that moral probation *proper* terminates at death. One may think that the practice of some of the early Christians in praying for the dead, and the dogma of Purgatory in the Roman Catholic Church, are at variance with this view. But waiving the contention that neither of these can be said to be derived from the teaching of God's Word, it will be found, on closer examination, that they do not contradict the statement now made. Of praying for the dead there is no trace amongst the early Christians till the middle of the third century, when the Church was beginning to show signs of corruption in various ways. But it was for their departed Christian friends that they prayed, and though they might ask, amongst other requests, that their departed ones might be acquitted on the Day of Judgment, it was the perfecting of a salvation which had been begun in this life which was practically the object of their prayers; and these prayers were offered consistently with the belief, which was universally held, that for those who had wilfully rejected salvation here there could be no salvation hereafter. Purgatory, too, according to the faith of the Roman Church, is for the purifying and perfecting of those who are really saved, who have not

committed mortal sin ; but for the *lost*, for those whose day of grace is closed on earth, the Church of Rome holds out no hope of salvation. There has been essential agreement on the point, through all sections of the Christian Church and in all periods of its history. We may surely infer that there must be something in the teaching of Scripture, as a whole, which accounts for such a wide concensus of opinion. The prevailing conviction, too, as to what the Bible teaches on this subject, has shown itself in a very intense and practical form. For the very zeal and earnestness of the Christian Church, in pleading with men to accept salvation in this life, had undoubtedly its origin in the belief that for those who wilfully rejected it the Word of God holds out no hope in the life to come.

It is no less important to observe that apart from direct verbal utterances there is *a certain harmony of Bible doctrine* which points to the same conclusion. (1.) Christ's own probation was limited to this life. Concerning Himself He says, "I must work the works of Him that sent Me while it is day ; the night cometh, when no man can work." The works of Him that sent Him had to be done in the time allotted for them ; and His language implies that death would terminate the opportunity. In the act of dying, the special work of securing

man's salvation from guilt was accomplished ; and could one imagine Christ to have failed, the opportunity was gone. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews draws a comparison, in this very respect, betwixt the practical effect of death in the case of Christ in providing a perfect atonement for sin, and the practical effect of death in the case of men in sealing them over to judgment. He says, "As it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment, so Christ was once offered," meaning that having died, deliverance from sin was at once complete, there was no renewal of the sacrifice or of the opportunity for making it. Thus the analogy betwixt Christ and men, Christ in providing salvation and men in securing it, and the finality which death gives to the work of both, is not only implied by the Apostle's language, but expressly stated. (2.) The doctrine of the Spirit's work as taught in Scripture, points also to the same issue. We are warned that the Spirit of God will "not always" strive with men, and not to "quench" the Holy Spirit. Men are told to seek the Lord "while He is to be found," and solemnly admonished of a time when they shall call upon Him and "He will not answer." They are represented by our Lord as saying, "Lord ! Lord ! have we not prophesied in Thy name ?" and denied

acknowledgment: and the foolish virgins in the parable are described as knocking in vain after "the door was shut." All such passages of Scripture, and they are very numerous, point to some limit beyond which the grace of God cannot be extended. Now if death be not the limit referred to, when and where does it occur? Were the possibility of salvation to extend indefinitely into the life hereafter, there is little occasion for all this vehemence of desire to arouse instant attention, and all this concern and alarm, as if some awful peril were immediately impending. If the grace of God be as available for salvation in the future as in the present life, why should Christ and His Apostles represent the duty as so urgent to "go into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature"? Why should Paul say, "Yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel;" or to take to himself the satisfaction in having faithfully proclaimed it, that he is "free from the blood of all men"? The doctrine of Christian responsibility, in relation to the unsaved, whether in Christian or heathen lands, surely involves this other truth, that there is a limit to the opportunity of saving them. It implies that we shall be judged immediately after death for the neglect of this duty, and if so, death must be the limit within which the duty can be fulfilled. In

the case of men who have been ignorant of the gospel but have lived up to the light they possessed, one can conceive of them as saved *at* death, and *after* death permitted to attain the perfect knowledge of the Saviour and the way of salvation which they had no opportunity of acquiring here. But if "the day of grace" itself is to be prolonged indefinitely, beyond the bounds of the present life, the whole basis of human responsibility with respect to the gospel, as set forth in Holy Scripture, becomes changed.

The burden of proof rests with those who affirm that salvation *is* possible after death; but there are *particular passages of Scripture*, whose teaching it would be very difficult to reconcile with such a doctrine. Take the words: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work nor device nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest." And though it may be said, that the words refer only to the severance of men at death from all earthly designs and pursuits, one cannot but regard such a limitation of their meaning merely to temporal things, as coming far short of the grand purpose and spirit of the Holy Scriptures. Surely God did not require to give us a revelation to inform us that when men die they become dead to the things of this life.

A similar limitation may, no doubt, be given to the meaning of the words, "The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee, they that go down to the pit cannot hope in Thy truth;" but we must look beneath the letter to the spirit of Scripture, if we would understand it aright, and I think these words may be fairly viewed as reminding us that life is the season of grace. When it is said, "If the tree fall toward the south or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth there it shall be," vague as the language may be, the ordinary interpretation is one which the words yield as readily as any other. "The Preacher" is not telling men not to be afraid of the inevitable, or not to wait for favourable opportunities, he is urging them to a life of beneficence, and may be understood here as reminding them, that as their character develops itself till death so it must remain, and so must be their final portion. The same doctrine is more than hinted at, when it is affirmed of them that "sleep in the dust" that "they shall awake, some to everlasting life and some to everlasting shame and contempt." In the recorded utterances of our Lord many expressions occur, which, if they do not expressly limit the opportunity of salvation to this life, seem either to assume, or more or less distinctly to imply it. He con-

trasts the enduring stability of the house built on the rock with the irreparable fall of the house built on the sand ; He represents the rich man and Lazarus, immediately after death, as separated in the unseen world, by a great gulf which no one could overpass ; He urges immediate striving to enter the kingdom of God, on the ground that many shall strive to enter when it is too late, and "shall not be able;" not to mention other passages of like import. When Paul beseeches men "not to receive the grace of God in vain," he adds as the reason for this appeal, "For now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation. The Apostle speaks of some whom "it is impossible to renew again unto repentance." And the voice of the Apocalypse, as if declaring the state of the departed, proclaims: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

The only passage of Scripture of any importance pointed to as teaching that the offer of salvation is to be preached after death, is that in the First Epistle of Peter, which speaks of Christ preaching to "the spirits in prison." The passage is one of difficulty. There is great diversity of opinion as to its meaning. If it taught that the soul of Christ

after His death on the cross went and preached salvation to the lost, it certainly stands absolutely alone in the Word of God. There is nothing like it or approaching it in sentiment in the entire Scriptures. This ought of itself to make us suspicious of such an interpretation; and we should resort to it only in the event of no other interpretation being possible. Our confidence in it is further shaken by the fact that interpreted thus it is exclusively to the spirits of those who lived and died in the days of Noah that Christ is described as having gone to preach. But why to them only? Why not also to those who lived and died long before Noah, and during the ages that followed? What is Peter doing when he uses the words? He is encouraging Christians to endure suffering and even martyrdom for Christ's sake; "For," he says, "Christ also hath once suffered for sins," and adds, "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit." Thus far we can understand clearly the word of encouragement the Apostle means to convey. It is that martyrdom is not destruction—it is not even the arresting of the work for which the martyr dies. Christ died, but His spirit only gained new quickening and increased power to quicken others through His dying. In the Epistle to the Ephesians Paul says that through the instru-

mentality of His Gospel, "Christ came" (*ἔλθων*, having come) "and preached peace to you who were afar off." Here Peter says, "In which" (that is, in His quickened and quickening spirit) "also He went (*πορευθείς*, having gone) and preached unto the spirits in prison"—that is, unto the captive souls of men, prisoners of guilt and sin; a description in harmony with Old Testament phraseology which speaks of "prisoners of hope," and of "the opening of the prison doors," through Christ, "to them that are bound." And when the Apostle adds, "which sometime were disobedient," as in the days of Noah, he may be regarded as giving an illustration of the condition of such souls of men in a state of sin, and the hopelessness of the condition apart from the quickening energy of Christ and His blessed Gospel. The reference to Noah is evidently suggested by some analogy which occurred to the Apostle's mind betwixt the water of the deluge and the water of baptism. The preaching of Noah saved only eight souls by water, but so much greater and mightier is the quickening power of the risen Christ, that there were now added daily to the Church of such as should be saved. Such a meaning is warranted by the words; it is consistent with the context; it accounts sufficiently for the allusion to Noah, and the figurative

reference to the saving of Noah and his family through the water of the flood, and the saving of Christians in connection with the water of baptism ; and it announces nothing that finds no countenance or parallel in any other portion of God's Word. But should the other interpretation be insisted upon, that Christ in His disembodied spirit went and preached to the spirits of the lost, there is no assurance that it was not a message of condemnation rather than salvation that He went to deliver. It has been said, indeed, that it is inconceivable that the compassionate Jesus could be the bearer of any other than a message of deliverance. This does not settle the point. We have to remember that while the ministry of our Lord was distinguished by its tender compassion, it was distinguished no less by its words of terrible denunciation.

Other passages of Scripture are sometimes adduced, to which it may be proper to refer. The language of the Psalm, "The Lord will not always chide, neither will He keep His anger for ever," belongs to a class of passages of which it is sufficient to say that they undoubtedly refer not to finally impenitent men at all, but to God's own erring people under the afflictive dispensations of Providence. They have no bearing on the question before us. When the Apostle says of Christ,

“Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth,” the words do not refer to His descending into hell to preach to its occupants, as some venture to suggest, but they remind us of the infinite condescension of God’s Eternal Son in His incarnation and humiliation, through which His mediatorial exaltation had been secured. And when the same Apostle describes the Father as reconciling “all things unto Himself by Christ, whether they be things in heaven or things on earth,” a passage quoted in favour of the theory of universal restoration, the term “all” must be determined by the prominent idea of the sentence in which it occurs. Elsewhere it is said, “The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it;” but, as a matter of fact, every man was not pressing into it, the words meaning that every man that entered the kingdom had to bestir himself to earnestness. The governing idea of the sentence is not the number who enter the kingdom, but the manner in which entrance can be gained. And here the Apostle is speaking of the Church of God and of Christ’s relation to it, and of “all things” pertaining to the redeemed and regenerated humanity, which is by faith united to Him as its living Head.

I must now look at the possibility of salvation

after death from another standpoint. My contention hitherto has been that the teaching of Scripture limits probation proper to the present life. But I would now inquire if there be anything in *the representations which the Bible gives of the state of the wicked in a future world*, to entitle us to hope that they may be saved after entering that state. To every reflecting mind the doctrine of everlasting punishment is a very awful one. Those who refuse belief in it must not claim for themselves a monopoly of moral tenderness. The only question for us to consider is whether or not it has a place in the teaching of God's Word. What new discoveries of divine mercy may await us in eternity it is impossible to say. Not revealed to us, they cannot be made the rule of our faith. It is certain that the language of Scripture represents the final condition of the wicked after a manner that seems to shut out all hope. Some of the more progressive theologians have been reluctantly compelled to acknowledge this, and abandoning Scripture on this subject, they have taken refuge in moral intuition. When Scripture is appealed to by those who deny the doctrine, it is in attempts to show that possibly the language admits of another signification than it seems to bear. That language is often figurative, but not less expressive on this

account. The sinner who wilfully rejects God's offered mercy is told that nothing remains for him but "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." And surely there is not a trace of hope in such an announcement of coming doom. The expressions "for ever," "for ever and ever," "outer darkness," "everlasting punishment," "eternal judgment," "death" as opposed to "eternal life," not to speak of many others, require no end of exegetical ingenuity to eliminate from them the dreadful thought which they seem to convey. Nor is it in the Old Testament, where we might have expected it, that the most terrible descriptions of the final state of the impenitent are to be found; it is in the New Testament, and in their most awful and impressive form *in the discourses of Christ Himself*. No fewer than a hundred and thirty passages can be pointed out in the New Testament, in which the doctrine appears to be taught, and no less than fifty-two of these occur in the Gospel narratives. Surely Christ and His Apostles knew the meaning of words, and could not rashly indulge in expressions of terror capable of conveying such a view of the condition of the lost unless intended.

The Bible idea of future punishment *cannot be rightly understood apart from the Bible idea of sin*. Sin carries in its very essence its own punishment.

It is alienation from God, separation from the light and favour of God, and self-banishment from the peace and happiness which flow from communion with Him. It possesses no power of self-recovery. Either the law which condemns the sinner must be changed, or a change must take place in the relation in which he stands to the law. To change the law would imply that formerly it had been unjust. And to suppose the sinner capable of repentance in the proper sense would be incompatible with the Bible view of a lost condition, for he is not lost who is capable of repentance. Further, if God can by an act of *power* interpose at some point in the future to arrest the condemnation of sin and liberate the sinner from its evil consequences—why does He not exercise the power now to put an end to all the pain and suffering which abound through sin? or why did He not by an act of power prevent evil from coming into existence at all? There appears no justifiable reason for the atoning death of God's Son unless there be some terrible abyss from which Omnipotence itself is powerless to deliver. Everlasting condemnation appears to some out of all proportion to the guilt of offences committed during a short earthly life, but it is not exclusively because the offences are few or many; it is because the effect

of sin on a man's moral nature is to set him in everlasting antagonism to the purity and love of God. The idea of future punishment is not that of men guilty of a certain number of sinful acts and punished by the mechanical application of stripes proportioned in number and severity to the acts committed. True, "he that knoweth his Master's will and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes," but this merely teaches the important connection betwixt responsibility and privilege. What receives prominence in Scripture is the moral and spiritual aspect of sin, as that which involves not transgression of the law of God merely, but the antagonism of the moral nature to God Himself. The punishment of sin is wrapt up in the sinner's state as a *free and accountable moral agent*, and is inseparable from that state. The question is not simply at what period, or by what means, can the man be taken out of hell, but also, and more emphatically, at what stage of suffering, and by what process, can hell be taken out of the man.

Those who argue that it would be most unjust to punish sins done during a few years on earth with suffering that shall stretch through endless ages, proceed on the assumption that death puts an end to the sinning. We have nothing in Scripture to indicate this. There is, on the contrary, every

reason to conclude that the obdurate and impenitent sinner will carry his sinning nature with him into eternity, and that instead of death putting a stop to his sins it will only liberate the soul from earthly restraints and render its sinful condition far more intense than it could ever be in the present life. Our Lord gives a glimpse into the moral state of the condemned in the words of the unfaithful servant: "Lord, I knew Thee to be an hard man, reaping where Thou hast not sowed, and gathering where Thou hast not strawed;" and the Apostle when he declares, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." Continuous sin must entail continuous punishment. Some have pointed to the beneficial effect of suffering and sorrow in arresting men in sinful courses and bringing them to repentance; but in all cases where this effect follows, you have a totally different moral type of man from that represented in the finally lost. The trials that come upon men—as the chastisements of a loving Father exert a purifying and elevating influence, but the mere infliction of punishment has no such effect. It hardens; and if it awakens remorse, we must remember that remorse is not repentance. All comparison betwixt the punishment of criminals on earth and the everlasting condemnation of the wicked, must necessarily be

defective : the administration of law on earth has regard to the safety of the State, and takes little cognisance of the moral aspect of offences ; but the future condition of the wicked has regard to the condemnation of *sin* in its opposition to an infinitely holy God. Punishment, it has been said, is either deterrent or reformatory, and if neither of these, it is vindictive. There is another alternative—it may be *vindicative*. Even in human tribunals the judge has chief regard to the vindication of the *law*. This is his proper province. His duty as a judge is to tell the criminal that the law is right which condemns him. As a benevolent man he may accompany his sentence with expressions of desire for the criminal's reformation, but the deterring of others and the reforming of the offender are not strictly speaking a judge's function. If the suffering of punishment can effect the regeneration of a fallen moral nature, there is no reason why Satan himself should be excluded from participation in the eternal hope of deliverance from evil and restoration to the angelic ranks.

To some it has appeared a mockery to say that men have a probation in this life worthy of the name. The lives of multitudes are too short, it has been said, and the circumstances in which they spend them too adverse, to have their eternity

suspended on their conduct here; and if they are to be put on probation in any real sense, it must be after death and in another state of being. But in view of the declarations of Scripture, this is surely a bold impeachment of God's justice in His dealings with men. Never did prophets or apostles speak of man's probation in this life after such a fashion. To them it seemed ever surrounded with the most grave and solemn interest. We may be sure that none will be condemned for ignorance or want of opportunity for which they were not themselves responsible. Men shall be judged according to the light and privilege they have enjoyed; and the consciousness of having had a probation sufficient will be no unimportant element in the suffering of those who have failed to improve it. The trial of our first parents, expressed in the words, "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," might seem to many to be wholly inadequate, but it was God's appointment. "And shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Appeals to mere sentiment on the question before us are neither wise nor convincing. When we are asked to reflect on what a loving father would do for a suffering child, as a token of what condemned men may expect a holy God to do for them in eternity, the cases are not parallel. How

much of the pain and anguish, the oppression and cruelty which prevail on earth, must appear on such a principle to be utterly inexplicable! The problems of the *moral* universe are even farther beyond the grasp of finite mind than those of the material. And when we are told that it would neutralise and destroy all the joy of heaven to know that friends beloved on earth had perished, the suggestion is due, I apprehend, to a very imperfect idea of what heaven is. No friend has ever loved the lost more tenderly than God Himself. If their loss does not destroy His blessedness, it will not blight the joy of those whose minds and hearts are brought into perfect harmony with His will. The shadows of ignorance and error which now leave men groping darkly after a rule of rectitude, shall be dispelled, and they shall walk in the clear knowledge of God's will as under a sky of cloudless light. Their discovery of God's will, and their acquiescence in it, shall be alike perfect. The sceptre shall be seen to be in a Father's hand, and the law of God to be but another name for love. The lofty ideal of human perfection represented in the Paradise of Dante shall be realised, and contentment, concord, security, and peace that nothing can ever disturb, shall have their source, their blessedness, and their end in the will of God.

ARTICLE IV.

BY THE REV. JOHN PRESLAND.

SINCE salvation is deliverance from sin, and not merely exemption from penalty (Matt. i. 21), its possibility after death depends upon the possibility of then attaining such deliverance. Thus the question for consideration requires a knowledge of the intrinsic nature of sin, and of the manner in which it affects the sinner.

“Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John iii. 4), or, as more correctly rendered in the Revised Version, “Sin is lawlessness.” The disasters it entails, therefore, are those which accompany lawlessness, or the violation of just and necessary law. For the commandments of God are never artificial or arbitrary, but are the essential conditions of order and happiness; enforced, not primarily as an assertion of Divine authority, but in the interests of man himself. Even the Jewish ceremonial law, provisional and temporary by its very nature—“a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things” (Heb. x. 1)—

was necessary, while it remained in operation, as a means for accurately typifying the spiritual service which mankind was then unable to render; and thus for maintaining some connection with heaven and the Lord, until fuller and more vital union could be restored. But the eternal principles of moral order embodied in the Decalogue, and summarised in the two great commandments (Matt. xxii. 36-40), are demonstrably inseparable from human welfare. Hence, although recognised for ages before the Exodus, they were then proclaimed amid the pomps of Sinai, that their supreme importance might be stamped with Divine authority, and their observance rise, accordingly, above mere ethical propriety into the spiritual region of religious obedience. They are as indispensable to the soul's happiness as submission to physical law is to the health of the body. Most literally, "in keeping of them," and not alone as an after consequence, "there is great reward" (Psalm xix. 11). They are "for our good always" (Deut. vi. 24). To observe and do them "is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life" (xxxii. 47); for, as the Lord expressly teaches, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix. 17).

Now the inevitable result of disregarding essential law, or the order according to which the

universe is governed, is the establishment of an organic condition at variance with such order, thus incapable of enjoying its delights, or participating in its activities. Every abuse of physical life, for instance, deranges the bodily functions, gradually rendering them intolerant of the exercises and pleasures natural in health : as in the case of dram-drinkers or opium-eaters, who become at length so abjectly dependent upon poison that they cannot subsist on unpolluted nourishment. The spiritual lawlessness of sin entails precisely analogous consequences. Of course the sinner is *morally* guilty, and until he acknowledges his transgressions before the Lord, and effectually repents, can never be saved ; but his danger arises, not from any merely forensic condemnation, nor from the anger of Him who is "good to all," and whose "tender mercies are 'over all His works" (Psalm clxv. 9), but from the distortion induced upon his spiritual organism by persistence in known wickedness. For the soul is no vague, impalpable shadow, but the very man himself, spiritual and immortal in substance and texture—the conserving basis and formative power which lays hold on the inert particles of matter, and by wondrous processes of assimilation and growth, builds them up into the natural body, and maintains its health and beauty. As, then, sub-

mission to physical law ensures physical soundness, while its violation entails disease and sorrow, so the deepest, most momentous effects of spiritual obedience or rebellion, are not *legal* but *organic*, wrought into the very fibre and structure of the immortal nature, and requiring an equally organic process for their eradication or reversal. "The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond: it is graven upon the table of their heart" (Jer. xvii. 1).

Sin thus impairs the actual substance and organisation of the soul, and incapacitates it for the purposes of its creation. Indeed the man wilfully habituated to evil finds the operations of Divine mercy itself occasions of poignant anguish; not because Divine mercy is ever otherwise than infinitely merciful, but because his perverted faculties have grown unable to bear its purity. Light, air, food, are among our choicest blessings. Yet the ophthalmic eye shuts itself in terror from the sun, the inflamed lungs draw every breath in torture, and the dyspeptic stomach loathes daily bread: these good gifts have in no wise become malignant, but the bodily functions, racked and distorted by disease, are too disordered to enjoy or use them. In like manner, the sinner acquires a mental and spiritual structure so deformed by evil, that he

cannot endure the conditions provided for a state of order.

This fact explains the frequent ascriptions, in the Word, of wrath and vengeance to the Lord. His Divine nature is defined, with absolute truth, in such statements as "Fury is not in me" (Isa. xxvii. 4); or, "He is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke vi. 35); while His infinite justice, instead of inexorably exacting penalty, is that supreme love of right which, wherever wrong exists, yearns to set it right, thus prompting Him, because "a just God," to become our "Saviour" (Isa. xlv. 21), who, "if we confess our sins, is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). None the less, however, the wicked suffer intensely when their deranged natures are subjected to the direct operation of His benignant laws; wherefore, since they inevitably attribute their pain to Him, the Scriptures, mercifully adapted to every phase of human experience, speak in places according to this most real appearance, and thus appeal to the motives best suited to influence them.

The positive inability of the utterly depraved to endure the sphere of heavenly and Divine goodness, received its fullest illustration when the Saviour was on earth. He went about doing good contin-

ually (Acts x. 38) ; working deeds of mercy ; speaking words of pardon and hope. Yet there were those who grovelled in agony at His approach, and cried, " Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time ? " (Matt. viii. 29). He did not wish to pain them, for He has " no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way and live " (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). The solemn, most awful truth, was that their purblind, corrupted natures were dazzled and stifled by His pure presence, so that they writhed as in the tortures of exposure to an element for which they were organically unfit.

Dying thus spiritually deranged and deformed, therefore, what lot awaits the impenitent, unsaved sinner ? Death changes nothing but the scene of his existence, and the fact of his investment in a material body. As the diver, when he lays aside his dress of leather and iron, walks freely on dry ground, the same man who had been toiling in the water, so the resuscitated soul, released for ever from the trammels of the flesh, resumes in the eternal world a life identical in all essentials with that which he pursued on earth. He is equally embodied as before, but in the spiritual and immortal form which had supplied stability and life to his natural frame, and which still retains the

qualities impressed upon it during his probation. With the good it is vigorous and fair in the measure of their reception of the Lord's saving health; with the wicked it is distorted and deformed by sin, their lawless infringement of the conditions of heavenly order. In each case, therefore, the principle is righteously and of necessity maintained:— "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he who is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

Remaining intrinsically the same as when on earth, moreover, and confined, as to their capacities for pleasure or achievement, within the limits of their spiritual organisation, the evil spontaneously gravitate towards such states and circumstances as are in accordance with their moral and structural deformity. Unable to breathe the air or see in the light of heaven, they are granted a refuge from such torturing purity; and thus, flocking together with their like, form that aggregate of embodied anarchy and sinfulness which we call hell. For even hell, rightly understood, is a permission of Divine compassion. "Unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. lxii. 12).

Yet hell is necessarily an abode of misery, de-

scribed in Scripture in gloomy imagery borrowed from the unquenched flames and never-dying worms of the Valley of Hinnom (Mark ix. 47, 48). Spiritual *fire* is love, the vital heat of the soul, which is holy or corrupt according to its object; the fire of hell being the vehement love of self, with its subsidiary lusts and passions—the “wickedness” which “burneth as the fire” (Isa. ix. 18)—by which all the lost are actuated. Although a scene of fire, however, hell is also a realm of “outer darkness” (Matt. viii. 12), a fact sufficient in itself to prove the figurative character of the language used, since material fire is invariably accompanied with light. This *darkness* is the dense shade of falsehood which universally prevails; the mental blackness of those who love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil (John iii. 19). And the worm which dieth not is the anguish arising from this falsehood, the wretchedness of foolish hopes perpetually proved fallacious, and of cunning schemes doomed to unvarying disappointment. The notion that this worm denotes the stings of conscience, is fallacious, since “those who are in hell have had no conscience, and therefore cannot be so tormented.”* Their distress in no wise arises from grief on account of their past sins, but from

* Swedenborg : *Arcana Cœlestia*, 965.

the fact that they are not allowed to continue them unchecked; for this is the delight of their life.* Hell is thus a scene of constant misery, where dwell together the unrepentant, murderers, robbers, liars, and profligates of all time; a crowd of mutual tormentors, each burning with fierce lust and hatred against all the others, seeking only his own wicked pleasure, and glorying in the injuries inflicted in its pursuit.

Have these miseries, then, no disciplinary or reformative effect? What should we expect from the similar examples upon earth? Here sin most frequently brings its manifest, appropriate, and inexorable retribution; disorder and intemperance of every kind being attended by some avenging Nemesis of shame, disease, or poverty, inseparable in the sequel from the transgression, and permitted, in the wisdom of Providence, as a means of prevention or restraint. Yet multitudes, altogether undeterred by repeated experience of such calamities, prefer evil indulgence, notwithstanding its painful consequences, to any effort of self-conquest and amendment, and alternately, or simultaneously, sin and suffer until arrested by death. And afterwards? Continuing, as we have seen, the same life they had lived on earth, but in spiritual bodies,

* Swedenborg: *Arcana Cœlestia*, 8232.

which are the precise outbirth and image of their inward lawlessness, and amid associates who are all of a like depraved quality with themselves, how should they change? If callous to the manifold influences appealing to them here, what is there, in the less favourable conditions there, to induce reform? If absolutely organised, by their own free determination, into forms the inversion of all true order—if thoroughly habituated to call evil good and good evil, to put darkness for light and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter (Isa. v. 20)—will they not rather rush headlong, with the more eager frenzy, in the same perverted course?

Can we suppose, however, that the infinitely loving, all-wise, and omnipotent God will suffer His beneficent designs in the creation and redemption of the world to be thwarted, in even a single instance, by the perverse folly of wicked man? Yet He has borne with evil ever since the Fall, and permits its existence now. Why? Are sin and misery less hateful to Him now than they would be in hell millions of years hence? Indeed, in thinking of His Divine providence, must we not banish considerations of time altogether? We know that “a thousand years” in His sight “are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the

night" (Psalm xc. 4)—or, in the yet stronger language of St. Peter, "that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (2 Pet. iii. 8). Why does He not, by some exercise of sovereign power, now and here, once and for ever, subdue and banish evil? The only possible answer is, Because this would be contrary to His Divine order; which preserves man's free will as man's inviolable attribute, without which he would cease to be human, and sink to a level intrinsically no higher than the brutes. If God does not, and therefore presumably cannot, consistently with His own perfect laws, compel sinners now, against their own set purpose, to forsake death and choose life, at what conceivable period of their immortality will the possibility arise? If such compulsion could at any time be practicable, would not infinite wisdom and beneficence have insured the necessary conditions ages ago, and thus have prevented so many centuries of woe and degradation?

Again: it may be objected that there is no ratio between the few years of temporal probation, and the tremendous eternal issues dependent on them. The vital question, however, is not as to the duration of trial, but as to its thoroughness and equity, If Divine Providence secures to all an ample oppor-

tunity for choice, and permits no one to quit the world until his election of good or evil is confirmed, there is neither injustice nor severity ; since further probation would only render the evil liable to deeper guilt, and expose the good to peril of backsliding and final ruin. Now, although our dim natural perceptions cannot perceive the wisdom and goodness of many Divine permissions in the removal of mankind to the spiritual world—which, indeed, not seldom perplex us by their apparent violence and suddenness—we cannot doubt that He who numbers the very hairs of our heads, and marks even the sparrow's fall (Matt. x. 29, 30), acts with perfect considerateness and mercy both in the time and manner for ending a man's mortal life. Besides, while satisfied that the destiny of every one is unalterably determined here, we must not forget that Scripture gives several indications of a process in the other life of instruction and preparation to fit the soul for its final state ; for thus, though always mindful to refrain from judging the spiritual quality of others (Matt. vii. 1, 2), we are allowed to hope that many whose condition appears unfavourable, may yet, in the sight of the Lord, prove capable of admission to His kingdom. " Whosoever hath, to him shall be given ; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even

that which he thinketh he hath" (Luke viii. 18). Sincere desire and effort after better things, though darkened by ignorance, and hampered by untoward circumstances, will be supplemented with the knowledge and culture needful to perfect them; whereas the heart which has destroyed within itself all such living germs, will at length be stripped of every misused attainment, since it would only prove a means of mischief. If our Lord encouraged hope on behalf of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. xi. 22), Sodom and Gomorrah (x. 15), and preached, during His descent to the World of Spirits, to the spirits in prison there (1 Pet. iii. 19), we may surely trust that many, whom our superficial minds might deem incapable of heaven, may yet conceal within them enough spiritual life to qualify them for admission, and we may rely on the Divine wisdom and mercy to afford any such life every opportunity for development and vigour.

Still, admitting to the uttermost the heinousness of sin, is not the disproportion too glaring between even the grossest transgressions possible during a probation of some threescore years and ten, and the eternity of torment meted out as its doom? Are we sure, however, that hell is rightly regarded as a state of unremitting agony? To ascribe never-ending torture to our Father in the heavens is so

repugnant to every conception of His perfect justice and compassion that one rejoices to believe it wholly unauthorised by Scripture. The most striking of the few examples in which the phrase "everlasting punishment," or any equivalent expression occurs, is in our Lord's last parable, illustrative of the Judgment, in which it is pronounced as the sentence upon the goats (Matt. xxv. 46). "Everlasting" is here *αἰώνιος*, which of course literally signifies "æonial" or "age-long;" but it is used in the same verse to describe the duration of heavenly blessedness, and is the original of sixty-nine out of the seventy-one cases in which the word "eternal" or "everlasting" appears in the Authorised Version of the New Testament. We cannot doubt, therefore, that, like *πνεῦμα*, *ψυχή*, and several other terms, it is exalted in the inspired writings to a metaphysical sense above its original natural meaning, and that our translators and revisers have been quite right in attaching to it the idea of absolute perpetuity. At the same time it will be noticed that the doctrine of the present paper has nowhere been based upon this disputed rendering. The other word, *κόλασις*, is that most essential to the argument now in course of development, because it undoubtedly signifies "punishment," not in the sense of pain inflicted to avenge

outraged law, but to ensure some change in the sufferer. What, then, is the bearing of this explanation, and how is it consistent with a belief in the impossibility of any radical amendment after death ?

Hell, as we have seen, is the *voluntary* dwelling-place of the unrepentant, unsaved sinners of all time. Paradoxical as it may appear, it is not primarily a state of punishment at all, at least as the word is generally understood ; although it is undoubtedly a scene of constant wretchedness, created by the corrupt loves and lives of its inhabitants. No one suffers judicially there for sins committed upon earth.* The worst, equally with the best, are welcomed by angels at the resurrection, and are invited to share their joys. But, as already stated, the wicked have acquired a nature—an actual organism—incapable of heaven. Thus they spontaneously seek their own place among their like ; and there, animated by their former depraved passions, they rush eagerly into wild excesses of self-exaltation, deceit, robbery, and violence, which are absolutely destructive even of such constrained order and torpid tranquillity as are possible in hell. Infringing the strict but benignant laws by which the Lord rules there,

* Swedenborg : *Heaven and Hell*, 509.

they thus incur severe penalties, enforced for the maintenance of these necessary laws ; that fear, the one motive to which their distorted natures are susceptible, may deter them from further transgression. As, however, their only delight is in evil, they are continually breaking through this restraint, and thus subject themselves to renewed punishment. Yet it is never inflicted in mere vindictiveness, nor by any direct Divine appointment, nor in accordance with any Divine pleasure. At most it is a permission, not an ordinance of Providence, sanctioned by infinite mercy in the interest of the lost themselves ; to keep them from mutual injuries which would subvert even the low compulsory order of which they are capable, and preserve them in the best condition which their wilful wickedness allows. Nor is it unintermitting, since it continues only until it has produced the necessary submission, when the sufferer is released, to return to his ordinary state. So long as fear withholds him from indulging his desires, he remains unmolested. But as all his desires are evil, and all his delights consist in gratifying his desires, his life is either one of constrained torpor, of fierce abandonment to corrupt pleasures, or of painful endurance of penal discipline. Hence it is truly described as a state of *κόλασις αἰώνιος*.

Other considerations confirm the solemn conclusion that those organically deformed by sin can experience no essential change in the future life. Growth consists in the development of germs implanted during some definite period of initiation and conception; its possibilities, unbounded though they may be in the expansion and cultivation of these germs, are rigidly confined within the limits of their nature and quality. No surgery, for instance, can supply sight to a man born without eyes; he may advance indefinitely in the perfecting and enjoyment of his other senses, but to the pleasures of vision he must remain blind, so long as his consciousness and powers are restricted by the capacities of his natural body. The illustration seems perfectly appropriate to the present subject. The indispensable condition of fitness for heaven, as defined by the Saviour, is regeneration: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3). The disqualification asserted is not legal but structural; not that the unregenerate shall be prohibited from entering the kingdom, but that, even if admitted, he would be unable to see it, because, without the second birth, he would lack the spiritual organisation which alone can endure its heat, light, and atmosphere. For the changes

caused by regeneration, as already seen, are most real and substantial, wrought into the very fabric and fibre of the soul. Without them a man can no more live in heaven than one congenitally deprived of eyes or ears can see or hear in the world; and for the same reason, because he is destitute of the necessary faculties. As, moreover, his incompetent spiritual body is the immortal form, whose capacities necessarily define and limit his life for ever, such disability must be perpetual.

A man's temporal probation in relation to his eternal future is thus like the ante-natal, embryonic conditions which determine his physical possibilities; yet with this difference, that its success or failure lies within the control of his own freewill. For in one way or another, with varying degrees of knowledge, and amid widely-contrasting circumstances, every man or woman upon earth is confronted with the alternative of right or wrong, the indulgence of self or submission to duty. The summons to self-sacrifice and the service of others, however elementary and imperfect the terms in which it is expressed—though even, as among the heathen, it come mingled with much superstition and delusion—is yet the voice of God to the soul; involving immediate responsibility; ensuring, if faithfully obeyed, ultimate regeneration; and sup-

plying the test for a perfectly righteous final judgment. For regeneration is a birth "from above"—*ἀνωθεν*—(John iii. 3), effected through the truth, "by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 23). And judgment is administered, not according to the scale of absolute, infinite right—indeed, if so, who could stand?—but in the measure of the knowledge and opportunities, and the consequent accountableness, of each. "If any man hear my words, and believe not," the Lord teaches, "I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John xii. 47, 48). Only in proportion as the Word—the voice of Divine truth—has been heard and understood, therefore, is any one subjected to its tribunal; but to that extent he is justly and inevitably liable.

Hence, in the order of Providence, all are tested as to their willingness or otherwise to submit to a law higher than their own selfish nature: thus they either receive into their immortal souls germs of new life implanted from above, which will grow in perfection for ever; or, rejecting the appeals of Divine truth, and clinging to their own unregene-

rate spiritual deformity, they remain organically incapable of heaven, and "cannot see" or "enter the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3, 5). For the "cannot" in such cases is emphatic and absolute, admitting of no future qualification or reversal. The time for establishing an angelic character has expired, the opportunity for the second birth has proved abortive, the renewed spiritual faculties and bias which should have been acquired are not acquired—not through innocent misfortune, as in the corresponding physical calamity, but from the man's own guilty perverseness and neglect—wherefore the consequences must abide. And these consequences issue in the production and confirmation of a form and nature directly contrary to those which prevail in heaven; an inveterate, rooted antagonism, which is, indeed, the fundamental cause of "the great gulf fixed," mentioned in the parable (Luke xvi. 26). For a lost spirit in hell is not an undeveloped angel, but the exact opposite of an angel; just as, on earth, evil is not immature goodness, but the implacable adversary of goodness. He hates everything the angel loves, and impiously denies whatever the angel believes. The angel's hopes are his most dreaded fears; the angel's home would be his torture-chamber. How can such a one be saved?

This fixed direction of character in the spiritual

world is in such contrast with its frequent fluctuations upon earth, that some explanation is needed for a change so momentous. One cogent reason is found in the altered circumstances of the other life. Here, as there, a man lives surrounded by spiritual influences—tempted, on the one hand, by “hellish foes, confederate for his harm;” lovingly guarded, on the other, and tenderly drawn towards the Lord and His healing grace, by those “ministering spirits,” who are “sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation” (Heb. i. 14). But here these opposing hosts appeal to him invisibly, from within. He neither sees nor hears them; involuntarily he experiences their operations, and spontaneously chooses between them. The saintliest cannot exclude the intrusion of wrong suggestions, nor can the most abandoned entirely stifle the inward voice of expostulation and reproof. These are the agencies by which a man’s character is formed; and while he remains on earth he is kept by Providence in equilibrium between them, that nothing may impair the exercise of his own freewill. In the other world, however, after his choice is made, these subjective and secret conditions are exchanged for an objective acquaintance with the sources of spiritual influence. Solicitation to evil is there the obvious work of

some foul and monstrous fiend ; holy desires and thoughts are manifestly instilled by a bright and glorious angel. Hence every one associates with his like, and quits all who are of contrary character. The wicked and the good, thus mutually shunning each other, no longer feel the consequences of each other's presence. The divergency and collision of moral force which render experience and conduct so variable upon earth, cease to exist, because each one voluntarily and exclusively restricts himself to the influences in which he delights. Hence the evil wilfully banish all instructive and reformative agencies, and bury themselves in the darkness and corruption which they love. Nor is this the destruction of freewill, but simply the final and inevitable mode of its activity when persistently abused. For how will a thoroughly bad man at length employ his spiritual liberty, except to banish the disturbing remonstrances of truth and purity, and thus to plunge himself more and more deeply into external circumstances incompatible with any radical change ?

Not only are the outward environments of the other life inconsistent with the possibility of then attaining salvation ; the interior constitution of the mind is so modified as to admit of no further alteration in its general bias. Here, the will and under-

standing act, in great measure, independently; a man can learn and comprehend many things for which he has no liking; which, indeed, are even directly opposed to his inclinations and habits. Thus he can profit by instruction, and, forcing himself by the Lord's help to obey distasteful truth, can rise, by repentance, to regeneration and heaven. After death, however, it is no longer permitted thus to have a divided mind, but the will—the real, essential man—takes the intellect under its own absolute control, and becomes the final measure of all knowledge and intelligence.* For it is impossible permanently to apprehend any truth which comes into collision with the affections; according to the Divine declaration, "From him that hath not, shall be taken even that which he thinketh he hath" (Luke viii. 18). Indeed, since such violated, unused truth is necessarily unpleasant—a voice of continual warning and censure—it is eagerly and persistently silenced as soon as the soul comes into that condition of entire consistency, both in itself and with its surroundings, which is the ultimate consequence of its inalienable freedom. Thus there is no longer the power to benefit by truth. The only light which could shine upon an upward path is wilfully extinguished, and the mind is hopelessly,

* Swedenborg: *Heaven and Hell*, 508.

because obstinately, blind. There is no wish to learn, no love for purity or goodness, no delight but in evil, no terror except pain. The lost are thus spiritual suicides, and how can such be saved?

The question, be it ever remembered, is not whether God is willing to release them. Of that there is no shadow of doubt. Even the angels, "for the sake of saving a soul, make no account of death; indeed, if it were in their power, they would endure hell for such a soul."* How much more perfect then, must be that infinite compassion from which theirs is derived, and compared with which their utmost tenderness is but as a drop to the boundless ocean, or a spark to the glorious sun! "The genuine doctrine of the Church, which is from the spiritual sense of the Word, teaches that God never turns away His face from a man, never rejects him, never casts any one into hell, and is never angry: . . . because God is goodness itself, love itself, and mercy itself; and goodness itself cannot do evil to any one, nor can love itself and mercy itself cast a man out, because it is contrary to their very essence, thus to the Divine nature. † To all eter-

* Swedenborg: *Arcana Coelestia*, 2077.

† Swedenborg: *Heaven and Hell*, 545.

nity, therefore, the Lord provides the best possible conditions for even the most rebellious of His children, and seeks to save them, to the uttermost, from the consequences of their own sin and folly. But can those who have wilfully made themselves the embodiments of falsehood and evil receive His Divine saving grace? "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (Jer. xiii. 23.) Would any persuasion induce either to change? Is not blackness, to the one, the very ideal of beauty? Does not the other find his mottled coat the cunningest lure, enabling him to hide stealthily among the mingled light and shade of the forest, and to spring with devouring fierceness on his unwary prey? Just so have selfishness and evil become the dearest nature of every inhabitant of hell; so inextricably interwoven with the texture of his being, that to uproot them would tear out his very life, and destroy his individuality. If, therefore, the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, but not otherwise, "then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Ibid.). For "no one's life can possibly be changed after death. An evil life cannot be transformed into a good life, nor the life of an infernal into that of an angel; since every spirit, from head to heel, is of the quality of his love,

thence of the quality of his life, and to transmute this into its opposite, is to destroy him altogether. The angels say that it would be easier to change a night owl into a dove, and a horned owl into a bird of paradise, than an infernal spirit into an angel of heaven."*

Therefore the New Church holds the solemn doctrine that unless the deliverance from sin which constitutes salvation be virtually effected during the present life, it is not possible after death. At the same time the Lord's mercy is so infinite in its embrace, so absolutely unwearying in its long-suffering, so wise, and if the term may be permitted, so tenderly ingenious in the multiplicity and adaption of its resources for applying to mankind the benefits of the redemption He effected during His incarnation upon earth, and the pentecostal influences imparted through His glorified humanity, that none are ever altogether lost but those who wilfully persist in choosing evil instead of good, and who obstinately reject every effort of His Divine grace to save them. And even these are never forsaken by His compassion, but, in their self-imposed exile and degradation, are carefully protected from every sin and misery not wholly inseparable from their state, and ensured all the

* *Heaven and Hell*, 527.

mitigation of which their wretched lot is capable. But beyond this His divine beneficence and order cannot go. The same all-wise respect for human freewill which, rather than reduce man to the condition of a machine, bears with evil here, also, and for the same reason, tolerates it there. Nor, however plausible, can we admit the retort that it would be better to become a mere automaton, or even to suffer annihilation, than to sink into the abyss of hell. For with all its restraints and penalties the life of the lost there is immeasurably preferable, in their eyes, to extinction, or even to the forfeiture of their perverted liberty, or to an enforced exposure to—what would be to them—the unendurable and hateful purity of heaven. Most literally, therefore, it is the Lord's mercy, not His vengeance, which renders "to every man," to the evil equally as to the good, "according to his work" (Ps. lxii. 12). And most emphatically, only the "work" of repentance and regeneration, which the Saviour came on earth to enable us to perform, can qualify any one to receive His Divine and immortal blessings. For "Except a man be born again, he cannot see," much less can he "enter the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3, 5). The essentially fatal result of sin is that it incapacitates the sinner, by the organic deterioration and de-

formity it induces, from living the life, and sharing the joys, of heaven. In this most real and awful sense, "Evil shall slay the wicked" (Ps. xxxiv. 21); "Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him" (Ps. cxl. 11). Therefore, "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. xcvi. 10); and now, in the accepted time, seek from Him that salvation, which, being deliverance from evil, secures perfect freedom, here and hereafter, from all its disastrous consequences.

ARTICLE V.

BY THE REV. JOHN PAGE HOPPS.

I ENTIRELY agree with Rabbi Singer that we are "at liberty to argue the subject on its own merits;" only I would cite other reasons for that than the one he urges, viz., that "the Old Testament speaks with no certain note on the subject;" for I must frankly confess that the Bible itself, even though it spoke fully and plainly on this subject, could not close inquiry with regard to it. It follows that I cannot agree with Dr. Leathes, that the vagueness of the Scriptures as to this grave question seems to have been intended to "withdraw our contemplation" from what he calls "unprofitable speculations." But no contemplation can be unprofitable that has for its object the finding out whether the Almighty is vouchsafing to us light from any direction on a subject of such transcendent interest; and no thoughts can be mere speculations that are soberly and reverently deduced from the great abiding facts of Nature and

human nature, and from confidence in the infinite perfections of our Creator.

The conclusion arrived at by Dr. Leathes is in harmony with the view which, until lately, was generally held, that the Bible gives no hope for "the lost." But, even though we granted this, as to direct statement, there is an immense amount of indirect evidence which few who hold Dr. Leathes's view sufficiently take into account. From such a passage, for instance, as "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," very important conclusions may be drawn. It affirms an undeniable truth, proclaimed by all we know of the government and providence of God: but we must be careful to observe what it really says. If a man could reap an eternity of misery for the sin or the unbelief of a few heedless years, he would not reap what he had sown; but, indeed, it is inconceivable that any man ever could sow impossibility of reform, and, therefore, endless perdition. But, even though some might go to that length of moral and spiritual degradation and ruin, is it not monstrous to assume that all who miss salvation here are in that evil case, so as to make salvation after death not possible for one of them? Let any one calmly consider what that involves. The affirmation is that "whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap"

—not something else, not less nor more ; and the inference from that is obvious.

Again, such sayings as “The Lord is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works ;” “The mercy of the Lord endureth for ever ; the Lord shall rejoice in His works” (and such sayings abound in the Bible), are full of suggestions which are none the less applicable to our subject because they are indirect. Is God good to “all” ? Is He good to those who, it is said, “after life’s fitful fever,” are so conditioned that they can never find place for repentance or salvation ? Does His mercy “endure for ever,” throughout eternity, and even while showing no mercy to those whose one brief experiment in this poor life ended only in an eternal and disastrous night ? Jesus tells us that in his Father’s house there are “many mansions.” Perchance, among them, there may be penitentiaries for the disobedient, schools for the ignorant, nurseries for the childish, and hospitals for the sick.

Dr. Leathes, in referring to the oft-quoted passage, “In the place where the tree falleth there it shall be,” rebukes, I am glad to see, the too familiar reading of it. But, even on the old lines, the remark may very pertinently be made, I think, that a fallen tree is not, as a rule, *left* where it lies at first. If it belongs to any one, it is turned into

serviceable building material; or perchance some carver works it up into forms of beauty. May not the All-Wise God find a use for all *His* fallen trees?

It often occurs to me that, in discussing this subject, we are too apt to do so as though God were a kind of huge magistrate, with a tremendous infusion of the personal and autocratic element. Is this tenable? It used to be universally believed that "visitations" of disease, or epidemics, and even unduly wet or dry seasons, were personally "sent" by Him as "judgments." Mr. Spurgeon, a short time ago, seemed to think that because we had sinned in going into a little war in the Soudan, God was going to punish us by plunging us into a great war on the frontiers of India. Is that really the way in which God deals with us? So, in relation to the other world, the popular mind has been filled with dramatic representations of a "great assize," a judgment seat, an open book, and an actual division of all mankind into two mighty groups before a great white throne. All this is extremely crude, and will hardly bear reflection; and it is none the less so because it is based upon a picturesque description found in the Gospels. But the curious thing is that this description does not at all agree with the popular

conception on the chief point. We are told that "the lost" will consist of the wicked, the unbelieving, the finally impenitent; but the verdict, in the Gospels, is made to turn upon feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, receiving the stranger, and visiting the prisoners and the sick. But who believes that now? Or perhaps I ought to ask—Who believed it fifty years ago? It does not appear to have entered into even Dr. Leathes's calculations.

But now, before we can make any real progress in this discussion, we must take more pains to define our terms. What is "Salvation"? and what is "Death"? The majority would, perhaps, say that these terms need no defining. Death is usually regarded as the ending of all we now comprehend as life, or the commencement of an existence of an utterly separate kind; while salvation is held to be the escaping from one of the two places into which the unseen world is divided, and admission into the other. But what if death is simply the passing on of the spirit-self into a sphere of existence like itself, where everything belonging here to that spirit-self will persist, practically unchanged by its separation from the body? and what if salvation is simply the process, wherever carried on, of the emancipation of the spirit-

self from evil conditions? This is a view of the case which seems more and more to be forced upon us by the time-spirit which is bringing to bear upon so many things the great revolutionary conceptions of law and order as controlling all life, and all its forms, movements, and developments.

If this is so, Dr. Leathes may not be on as safe ground as he seems to be when he says that "apart from the declarations of the Scriptures on the matter, the question is one that we have no means of answering," and that the question "can only be answered from the statements of Divine revelation on the subject." What he means by "Divine revelation," we, of course, know well; but the time has fully come for asking whether Divine revelation is confined to the pages of the Bible. Is there no Divine revelation in modern civilisation, in the special voicings of conscience, reason, and humanity, in our day? Is there no Divine revelation in the modern ideals of justice, mercy, righteousness? Nay, is there no Divine revelation in the old motherly and fatherly instincts which, perhaps, too many have forcibly repressed, in obedience to something that has been, with too little discrimination, identified with Divine revelation?

Questions such as these will appear to many all

the more worthy of earnest consideration in the presence of the grave statement made by Dr. Leathes, that the knowledge obtainable from the Scriptures on this subject is "absolute and final;" and specially in the presence of the very vague results he himself lays before us as the product of his examination of the Scriptures. The Book of Psalms, for instance, though the most devout, emotional, and spiritual Book of the Old Testament, is declared to be barren of results, so far as our subject is concerned—a Book that contains "hardly anything that sheds a ray of light" upon it. And Dr. Leathes, in confessing this, says very hopelessly, as it seems to me—"Nor do I think that the language of the Old Testament anywhere is such as to give us ground to dogmatise as to its teaching about the conditions of the life to come;" and adds, "it is not reasonable to seek in it for any definite answer to the question immediately before us." Surely, to any one who thinks that the Scriptures contain "a supernatural expression of the mind and will of God towards man," it must be a somewhat appalling thing to have the whole of the Old Testament cut away from him just when he wishes to consult it about the most important thing in connection with the decisions of that mind and will.

Turning to the New Testament with Dr. Leathes, we are hardly compensated for his hopelessness with regard to the Old. At the very outset, we encounter an uncertainty which is exceedingly puzzling. We are told, in apparently unmistakable language, that "to believe is to have everlasting life, or to live for ever," and that "the life that we enter into when we believe in the Son of God, is a life that is unassailable by death." Interpreting the words of Jesus, "I am come that they might have *life*" (Dr. Leathes's italics), he takes this to mean "the simple and indestructible essence which has no death in it." Does Dr. Leathes believe in "conditional immortality"? It seems like it; for, when he says that "the life that we enter into when we believe in the Son of God is a life that is unassailable by death," he immediately adds—"The real question, therefore, is this—Supposing that we have not entered into the possession of this life before death, is there any reason to believe that it is possible to do so afterwards?" And yet, in quoting the words, "the fire that never shall be quenched," and "where their worm dieth not," he says—"Here it is stated, as far as finite human language can state it, that the *condition is changeless.*" What "condition"? I ask. All it says is that a worm does not die, and

a fire is not quenched ; it does not say that the sinner or the unbeliever is tormented without end, and that *his* condition is changeless ; still less does it say that, after death, he fails to find the "life that is unassailable by death." Dr. Leathes says that "If sin is, or may be, prolonged in the condition of existence after death (and that seems to be inconsistent with 'conditional immortality'), it follows that its natural punishment and its natural consequences must ensue." But sin may be prolonged without being necessarily eternal ; and we might reasonably say that "the natural consequences" which "must ensue" are as likely to be the sinner's ultimate weariness of sin, and his longing for emancipation, as the prolonging of it to all eternity. The question is whether any such weariness and longing can come after death, and whether, if they could and did come, they would be of any avail ; and it seems to me that if they cannot come after death to any one, or if, though they come, they will be of no avail, then there must be something in the government of God which supernaturally prevents it ; and if that is so, it is hard indeed to see how that can be made to harmonise in any way with the goodness or even the barest justice of God.

It is pleasant to find that Dr. Leathes leaves

open a little door of hope. He says, "We have no reason for believing that for a man dying in a condition of wilful and deliberate impenitence, there is or can be any hope of further opportunities being given him to repent." Then he expressly excludes from the sentence of hopelessness "the vast numbers whose condition is one of ignorance, helplessness, lack of opportunity, and the like;" though of these he only says, "We cannot fairly gather anything from the Scriptures respecting them. Their condition and prospects are laid up in reserve among the secret things that belong to the Lord, and it is hopeless and useless for us to inquire concerning them." I hope to show that inquiry is not entirely useless; but, before I proceed, I would just point out that in defining those for whom there is or can be no "hope of further opportunities" for repentance, as those who die "in a condition of wilful and deliberate impenitence," Dr. Leathes leaves open a door that may prove to be not small, but very wide. Who shall say what wilful and deliberate impenitence is, or who the "wilful and deliberate" impenitents are? And can it be really true that the possession of a little more knowledge, or a little more strength of will, or a little more resolute self-assertion, shall make all the difference between having "no hope of further opportunities"

and being excused on account of ignorance, or helplessness, or lack of opportunity? If so, would it not be infinitely better to be born an idiot or a hopeless fool? For, though that would deprive one of any share in the real uses of these poor threescore years and ten, the risk of eternal misery would be escaped; and surely the merest chance of escaping that would be desirable at any cost, just as the merest chance of not escaping it would make life itself an unspeakably frightful hazard or a gigantic curse.

When we consider what life really is to multitudes in all our large towns, it is difficult enough, in any case, to hold fast by one's faith in a just, to say nothing of a merciful, God; but if we add to the inequalities and miseries of life here the fearful anticipation of heightened and never-ending inequalities and miseries hereafter, the difficulty becomes positively appalling. Besides, the beings who suffer most from the inequalities and miseries of life on earth are the very beings who are least likely to know anything about "saving faith," or "the way of salvation," or to overcome temptation, and win any of the beauty of holiness. And yet, on the supposition that there is no salvation beyond the valley of the shadow of death, these hapless ones will only find the wrongs of earth followed by the

catastrophes of hell. Can it be true? May we not say, with reverence, and because of our reverence—Can it be true, and the justice and love of God be true?

Florence Nightingale spoke for millions of devout souls when she said: "I can't love because I am ordered—least of all can I love One who seems only to make me miserable here to torture me hereafter. Show me that He is good, that He is lovable, and I shall love Him without being told. But does any preacher show us this? He may *say* that God is good, but He shows Him to be very bad; he may say that God is 'Love,' but he shows Him to be *hate*, worse than any hate of man. As the Persian poet says: 'If God punishes me for doing evil by doing me evil, how is He better than I?' And it is hard to answer, for certainly the worst man would hardly torture his enemy, if he could, for ever. And unless God has a scheme that every man is to be saved for ever, it is hard to say in what He is not worse than man; for all good men would save others if they could. . . . It is of no use saying that God is just, unless we define what justice is. In all Christian times people have said that 'God is just,' and have credited Him with an injustice such as transcends all human injustice that it is possible to conceive."

It is on that great word *justice* I now take my stand. Millions of children are born with sorrowful inheritances of evil in their very brains and blood, with taints, and weaknesses, and degradations, and half insanities that make life a cruel struggle. Millions of others are born right into the very midst of squalor, anxiety, and foulness both of body and of soul, with no real childhood to sweeten the brain, and no joy to sun the heart at the beginning of the battle of life—put too soon to work for the sake of the crust that must be earned or stolen from day to day; ever more sinned against than sinning, though the world will never believe it—poor, sorrowful souls, whose earthly lives call aloud to the Creator for explanation and recompense, not punishment and hell.

Is it said that of such nothing is affirmed, that these are not classed with those who live and die “in a condition of wilful and deliberate impenitence,” for whom there is no “hope of further opportunities” for repentance? Then is the inference inevitable, that for these, in the absence of any overwhelming authoritative ground for declaring their condemnation, there must be, on every ground of justice, opportunities for education and advancement in the world of light beyond. But if for these, why not for others? Why not for the merely

frivolous, who may have been, not vicious, but only negligent? Why not for those to whom the need of salvation was never brought home, or to whom all known schemes of salvation were unacceptable, or whose very sober love of truth may have kept them from giving in to what others called "the Gospel"? Why not for all those who, for any reason, have missed, during this little, hurried life, what we regard as salvation? What if death is an advance for every living being, one more great step onward in an orderly development of life? And what if, when the next great step is taken, the light will shine in upon the open spirit-eyes as it never could shine in here? What if the truth, that here could never touch the mind and win the heart, shall come right home to both in the new light of the "all-revealing world," where waits for us the gathered wisdom and goodness of countless ages? Why not? Is it possible to believe that our Heavenly Father will consent to waste the wealth of the love and wisdom and goodness of heaven, and that Jesus, whose delight it was to seek and save the lost on earth, will seek and save no more for ever, and at the very time when with him are the countless hosts of heaven? Or is it possible to believe that the angels of God, who, it is said, are gladdened when but one sinner repents, have only

this poor sphere for their activity, and depend for their least selfish joy only upon those who here find their way to the path that leads poor wayfarers home? We are often told that the redeemed will spend eternity in praising God with harps in their hands. Harps in their hands, and yet so many in the dark, and so far away! I often think that instead of harps in the shining golden streets, they will take lights and go into the outer darkness to seek and save the lost.

It may be said that this is all mere speculation, and speculation only based upon imagination. Is that so? God made man, and God guides the ages; and surely if man has come to see what justice implies, what goodness requires, what mercy means, and what love desires, we build on the rock when we build upon the most sacred verdicts of the soul. But we need not rely only on the verdicts of man; we may pass on to our ideal of God. We call Him "Our *Father*." What do we mean? In any sense in which He is the Father of one man, He is surely the Father of all; and, in any sense in which He is our Father now, He surely will be so for ever. So, too, in any sense in which Fatherhood can be attributed to Him, He must desire and will the emancipation of His children from all evil, and their consummated blessedness in the light of His eternal

wisdom, pity, love. What follows from all this? Is God the All-Holy? If so, can He consent to the final victory of sin? Is He the All-Powerful? If so, can He not secure the ultimate salvation, not of some only, but of all? Is He the All-Merciful? If so, will not His very pity constrain Him to rescue the desolate strugglers who emerge from this world of blinding mists into His higher world of perfect light?

Can that be called mere speculation, then, which is based upon inevitable conclusions that follow from the highest ideals of a perfect God? True piety and reverence for God demand that certain inferences should be drawn; and if we fail to draw those inferences because, in a written word, they are not, or seem not to be, plainly visible, it is possible that we may here be perilously near the "sin against the Holy Ghost," which may be none other than this very repression of the voice of the living God to living man.

This argument, which is based upon an appeal to the perfections of God, is greatly strengthened if we press home a consideration which is suggested by the exact wording of the subject, which is not "Is salvation *found*?" but "Is salvation *possible* after death?" If we answer in the negative, we shall be driven to ask the question, Why is it impossible? Possibilities are founded in divine inten-

tions. Are we, then, to conclude that it is a part of the plan and providence of God that repentance and amendment shall be possible during a hurried, experimental life on earth, and be made impossible for ever afterward? If salvation is not possible after death, something will be done to change the nature of man—to make of a naturally progressive being an unprogressive one—to violently, because invincibly, prevent the working of the most vital and characteristic faculties of the human being, and to make improvement impossible at the very time when the wonderful experiences and discoveries of the unseen world, bursting upon the astonished spirit, might work wonders of repentance and conviction. Is it conceivable? Rabbi Singer did well to point out that the believer in immortality holds that “after the death of the body the soul is conscious, employs memory, is sensitive to spiritual pain and pleasure,” &c. ; and yet, if salvation after death is not possible, “one thing alone it cannot do” : “it cannot repent.” But why should the one thing needful be the one thing excluded? And excluded it must be if salvation is not “possible.” But if impossible, who made it so? If the power to repent, to improve, to advance, is taken away at the critical moment, who took it away, and why?

It cannot be too much insisted upon, that if salvation after death is not possible, we must press for an answer to the question :—What then can be the object of endless punishment or misery ? Rabbi Singer truly says that “the ethical element underlying all penalties is that they shall be either deterrent or reformative :” but endless punishment, where all are punished endlessly, can be neither the one nor the other. It used to be held, indeed, that the demands of Divine justice, and the government of God, required the vindications of eternal punishment ; but this is precisely what humanity is now being driven to deny ; and it is precisely the injustice of the whole thing that drives us to deny it.

The attempt to shut up all inquiry by the too-familiar expedient of falling back upon the plea that man must not call God to account, can only fail. While man is a moral being, he is bound to draw moral inferences ; and the measure of his repugnance to such a doctrine as that of the endlessness of future punishments may be the measure of his fidelity to an awakened moral sense, and a very tender reverence for God.

We have a right, then, to press for an answer to the question : “What can be the object of endless punishment or misery ?” The answer surely can-

not be a denial of any object, or an affirming of anything that would suggest want of power, or will, or intention, on the part of "Our Father." But, in the absence of any such denial or suggestion, have we not a right to infer that the wisdom, goodness, and power of God which here, in this brief space, are so strong to help and save, cannot become powerless or be withheld in the life beyond the grave? I say "cannot" because, if we are to believe at all in the Almighty, and in what is known to us as wisdom, goodness, and power, as attributable to Him, it is simply impossible to think of Him as helping and saving men during a poor, brief existence, in the first crude stages of their career, and then dooming them to hopeless neglect for ever. I have asked: What will happen to the unsaved, that death should make improvement impossible? and to the saved, that death should end their blest career of seeking and saving the lost? and now might I not ask with all reverence, what happens to "Our Father" in the unseen world, that He cares for the lost no more? If there is any answer to that question, I should be thankful to have it. To say that God's ways are not as our ways, is no answer. It is worse than no answer; for if what is justice with us is not justice with God, and if what is bad and cruel with us may

be the reverse with Him, we can know nothing about righteousness or morality or duty, as founded upon the will or mind of God; and a more dangerous doctrine than that it is impossible to conceive.

Dr. Leathes has attempted to anticipate this serious difficulty by saying, "We are intruding into a world of which we have no experience, and are venturing to decide upon a condition of things of which we cannot even form a conception." In one sense that is true, but not in another. That suggestion might have weight with an agnostic, but it ought to have none with a believer in the omnipresent and unchangeable God. If "Our Father," who manifests Himself to us here through the conscience, through the affections, through the reason, and through what we cannot help regarding as the revealings of His love, is the God of the unseen world, we surely can reason from the known to the unknown, from the seen to the unseen, and can conclude that justice and mercy there will be different from justice and mercy here only by being perfect, not by being essentially unlike—only by being more and not less beautiful, manifest, and mighty to save.

And now we may come still nearer to the very heart of our subject by inquiring, Upon what does salvation depend? Various answers have been

given. Sometimes we are told that it depends upon opinion or belief, and that heresy or unbelief may carry condemnation with it. Or we are told that failure to believe in God's mercy will deprive men of it; and that disinclination to receive a special plan of salvation will involve the loss of salvation altogether. Or it is said that condemnation is the result of sin. It is essential that each of these should be considered, in order to ascertain, if we can, where the element of impossibility of salvation after death comes in.

The first of these was once very generally held,—that salvation depends upon opinion or belief, and that heresy or unbelief carries with it condemnation. If this is so, we are driven to the conclusion that we may be lost for being honest, sensitive, resolute, or even reverent; for honesty, sensitiveness, resolution and reverence have all led men to reject doctrines regarded by the great majority as vital and essential. Rénan, who certainly does not belong to the class who are guilty of “wilful and deliberate impenitence,” but who is one of those who risk all there is to be risked by what is usually regarded as heresy or unbelief, very pertinently said, “I receive several times a year a letter, always in the same handwriting, and containing these words, ‘If, however, there *is* a Hell!’ Assuredly

the pious person who writes me this desires my salvation, and I thank him. But Hell is a hypothesis which harmonises but little with what we know of Divine goodness in other matters. Besides, in all frankness, if there is a Hell, I do not think I have deserved it." Surely he is right. A thoughtful seeker after truth can have nothing to fear from God. Why should he? If he has made a mistake, he is at all events honest: and perchance, the honest man who has fallen into error may be even more acceptable to God than the selfish or the pliant man; who has only drifted into the truth because he has drifted with the stream. If any degree of error may carry with it the missing of salvation here, is it not probable, from every point of view, that the seeker after truth will find it in the world of light beyond? Why not? The seeker after truth has sown love of truth; why, then, should he not reap the finding of it? If so, no earnest and honest unbelief can carry with it endless misery, but the reverse; for, in truth, it seems in every way reasonable to say that all brave and faithful seekers, however they may have erred here, will come to right conclusions on the other side, where the teachers must be so wise and the guides so sure. But, indeed, that great Englishman, that clear and noble thinker, John Locke, said all that

need be said on this, two hundred years ago:—
“He that makes use of the light and faculties God has given him, and seeks sincerely to discover truth by those helps and abilities he has, may have this satisfaction in doing his duty as a rational creature, that though he should miss truth, he will not miss the reward of it.”

If we turn to the second of the cited causes of condemnation, we come upon a familiar but very incomprehensible reason for it. If the evidence did not abound, it would be difficult to believe that great leaders in Christendom have, for ages, taught that God's love, if not believed in and taken advantage of here, will turn to pitilessness beyond the grave. I am tempted to prove it, but will not. Illustrations abound, from Isaac Watts to Jonathan Edwards, and from Jonathan Edwards to D. L. Moody and C. H. Spurgeon. But no one has ever shown why God's love should cease when it might shine the brightest; or come to an end when it might come home with most penetrating power to the neglecter's heart: nor has any one ever shown how the Divine Fatherhood can be so different from earthly fatherhood, and—may I not say it?—so inferior to it; for, whereas the good father on earth loves on even after death, and wistfully thinks of the poor forgetting child now on the

other side, and would fain go anywhere to find and bring him home, the love of the Heavenly Father, we are told, has turned to ice or hate. Is it possible to believe it, and yet to really think, adore, and love?

I shall be told—we have been told for generations—that the unsaved have had their “day of grace;” that they lived out their period of “probation,” and made it of no avail; that they “rejected the Gospel,” and so are without excuse. The words are only too familiar. But what a “day of grace” is life for millions, with the hungry cares and urgent anxieties of life pressing upon them! What a “probation” is life for those who have been baffled all their days, and exposed to temptations, with but little power of resistance, or few visible inducements to resist! And as for the “rejection of the Gospel,” we have only to remember what it really means. It means that some creed has not been sufficiently convincing, that some book has not been sufficiently impressive, that some preacher has not been sufficiently active or sufficiently near. Thousands die in London every year, who do not know the meaning of the word “Gospel;” thousands of others die, who have never been interested in the subject. They do not “reject” the Gospel; they do not think about it. They are not “enemies

of God ;” they simply see no signs of Him in their dreary, dingy lives. They live and toil and die in grooves across which the lines of church and chapel seldom cut ; and these are not necessarily the most ignorant or the most vicious of mankind. Is it possible to believe that for these there can be no hope beyond the grave ?

The last of the causes of condemnation named is, of course, not without grave reasonableness, inasmuch as it points to the alienation of sin which, while it lasts, must make impossible true communion with the “heavenly places.” But we surely push this too far when we exclude *all* contact between the evil and the good, the contact of sympathy and pity and helpfulness, as well as the contact of communion. We may be safe in saying that sin, while it lasts, must exclude the evil from communion with the good ; but is there any reason for saying that he who ends as a sinner here, however impenitent, can never come into relations of mercy and helpfulness with holy spirits ? Besides, much of what we call sin is the result of inherited tendencies, and is, in a sense, unavoidable. Who shall put true values on the full flow of virtue that comes without much effort, and the pulsations of longing for better things that may represent the agony of years of struggle with easily-besetting

sin? Again, much of the sin of the world is but a part of the stupendous process of evolution, the working out of the brute—the tiger and the ape, as Tennyson has it—that the man may be evolved into harmonious and beautiful life. Man is not yet created: he is being created; and many forms of sin are incident to his march out of darkness into the marvellous light. What, then, if this is only one stage of his great existence,—a rough marking out of the lines of his glorious life, to be filled in and perfected elsewhere? There must be a great deal of truth in a keen saying in one of the sermons of Mr. Maurice's successor, Mr. Crauford:—"This world is a place where God slowly tunes the instruments which shall hereafter send forth the sweetest music. Men stupidly take God's tuning of the instrument for the concert itself; and then they exclaim that it is a very poor thing and a great failure." It is true that a dim margin remains wherein may be sorrowful possibilities of hopeless moral and spiritual bankruptcy; but admitting that to the fullest extent, may we not still fall back on the as yet unrevealed mighty forces of good in the universe, and confidently hope and believe that "good *will* be the final goal of ill"?

Here, then, is a way of escape from that dark thought of God which is now rapidly becoming

unendurable,—a way of escape which can only be gained by absolute confidence in His wisdom, justice, love, and power. That will enable us to come to Him without having mind and heart confused and harassed with a multitude of perplexing thoughts. It gives us every needed motive for exertion, yet saves us from despair. It presents us with a view of the hereafter whose influence may be felt, and felt for good, in everything relating to man's life here. Before the darkest problems of earth, it will enable us to hold on our way, no longer oppressed by the terrible thought that this little life is all; and, in the valley of the shadow of death, it will give us the most absolute hope and confidence in God.

They who feel any difficulty in revising the verdicts of the past by the light of the present must remember that society and civilisation are progressing with the individual, and that our modern ideals of justice and mercy are among the latest products of human development. First the animal, then the spiritual. Read ancient history; read the history of the Middle Ages; read the history of England up to the times of the Georges. What a horrible record of bloodshed and tyranny, conspiracy and treachery, massacre and murder! How little value was set upon human life! How un-

conscious men seemed to be of even the rudiments of justice in dealing with the ignorant, the conquered, the dependent and the poor! In the dark days of the past it was natural enough for men to believe that the King of heaven would do what the kings of earth were always doing. Now we reform our criminals if we can; we do not torture them. We exchange our prisoners of war; we do not murder them. We try to calmly measure out punishment adequate to offences, and likely to promote virtue; we do not crush in a spirit of revenge; or, if we ever do, we come to see that the spirit of modern civilisation is violated. And what is this "still small voice" of the time-spirit but the word of the living God to living man?

I cannot part from the subject without referring to a thought suggested by Rabbi Singer,—a thought respecting which I have long felt that it will in the future receive far more attention than it has received in the past. He asks, "What joy can heavenly spirits feel while they are aware that those who once were bound to them by the tenderest ties of love or the strongest bonds of friendship, with whom to be reunited is the all but universal hope of believers in immortality, are condemned to have the gates of hope for ever shut against them, and to pass eternity in nameless

torture and remorse?" "What joy," indeed! Might we not rather ask:—If salvation is not possible after death, how can heaven be anything but a place of lamentation and woe? Can the suggestion be possibly made by any one, that the God who will make amendment and hope impossible for "the lost" will make callous or oblivious the saved? Millions of good mothers have mourned for children lost to light and love on earth, by whom they have been brought down with sorrow to their graves. How will God make them forget their bereavement and their grief? How could they be happy in the loveliest heaven that ever shone in any poet's dream? Robert Buchanan, one of our truest and most spiritual modern poets, has put this with pardonable force in his brief song of "Doom":—

"Were I a soul in heaven,
Afar from pain,
Yea, on Thy breast of snow,
At the scream of one below
I should scream again."

That must be true; and they who say such things to-day are not rebels fighting against God; they are anxious children trying to make their way through the jungle to the Father's feet.

ARTICLE IV.

BY THE REV. J. CAIRNS, D.D., LL.D.

THE writer of the following paper desires to begin by stating briefly what are to him the conditions of any such argument. He cannot regard any argument as possible, *except between those who are agreed as to their standard of belief*. A rationalist can argue with a rationalist on the principles of reason as final, and can include the evidence of Scripture, but only as a part of the testimony of reason. So a supernaturalist can argue with a supernaturalist; but only in so far as they agree as to what makes up Scripture and thus has binding authority. The rationalist and supernaturalist can only argue (properly speaking) in so far as the question may be considered from the side of reason; for it is hardly argument in the proper sense, when the rationalist tries to show, that even granting the authority of the Bible, the supernaturalist has at this point mistaken its interpretation. So even between supernaturalists there may fail to be a common standard, if one of them rejects

any material parts of the Canon held by the other ; or, still more likely, if one holds so much laxer a view of inspiration as to recoil from results, which the stronger view of inspiration applied by the other constrains him to receive. Again, as between Romanist and Protestant there may fail to exist here a common standard. They may be both supernaturalists with a high doctrine of inspiration ; but they may differ as to the Canon, and this may and does affect the issue ; or tradition may from the first combine important materials with Scripture, and even without this Church authority may control its interpretation. These things are often forgotten ; and in a so-called symposium on a question in theology, Rationalists and Supernaturalists, Romanists and Protestants, Mystics and Literalists, may be supposed to be reasoning with each other, while ultimate reasoning is not possible between them ; and the only use (and it is a real one) of their conjunction, is to set forth their several opinions ; or within certain limits, where they really meet, to accomplish some portion of argument.

Beyond this agreement as to a standard, which applies more widely than to those who take part in this particular symposium, these, if they are to argue with each other as to the possibility of

salvation after death, must have *some radical agreement as to the necessity, nature, and means of salvation in general*. Men may have, while claiming the Christian name, so weak an idea, according to the view of other Christians, of the necessity of salvation, that they may be held to deny that salvation is possible even *before* death as well as *after* it, inasmuch as whatever of beneficial change, according to them, Christianity brings, does not seem to amount to *salvation*. If Christianity be little more than moral education and progress, then there seems in the nature of things no reason for any crisis, or any limit of favourable influence. If there be no real and terrible fall, if Christianity be not in the ordinary sense a special remedy, as well as a supremely needful one, with grand marking provisions of incarnation, atonement, and second birth, then those who differ so widely about salvation can hardly reason together about its times and seasons; nor is any study of principles of reason which they so differently apply, or of Scripture texts which they so variously interpret, likely to bring them together at this one point.

Once more, the present writer feels that one aspect of salvation has for him a vital and determining influence on the whole question raised in

this discussion, viz., *that salvation, if at all, must be by grace*. Where sin is not regarded as deserving penalty, *salvation* is not in the Christian sense possible; for if pardon and recovery be regarded as binding on God, the whole Bible idea of *grace* seems excluded. The question on Christian ground is limited to what God has chosen to do, while He might in just displeasure against the sinner have chosen the opposite. It is not a *necessity* of salvation after death that is the question, but a *possibility* grounded on the very nature of salvation in all Christian theology, as something dependent not on justice but on mercy; for the hell of the Bible is confessedly only for those who own its justice, as the heaven of the Bible is for those who trace it to Divine mercy.

These remarks have been premised in order that the question may be adjusted between the writer of this paper and Mr. Page Hopps, who has contributed the last, and who, as representing a very different school of general thought, will not complain of having the fundamental grounds of difference, that lie widely outside of this question, stated.

First of all, we do not agree as to the final authority of the Bible. Mr. Page Hopps frankly confesses "that the Bible itself, even though it

spoke fully and plainly on this subject, could not close inquiry with regard to it." We could, therefore, only argue on the ground of natural theology. But even here we do not seem sufficiently to agree. Mr. Page Hopps denies that punishment can have any other than a reformatory or deterrent character; so that according to him it is never mere vindication or retribution. This greatly weakens any argument for future penalties, though there might still remain their deterrent influence. He also seems to hold so different an idea of sin, that it is not possible to conduct argument. "Much of what we call sin is the result of inherited tendencies, and is, in a sense, unavoidable." This is going beyond the Calvinist, who holds that depraved tendencies, though inherited, do not destroy responsibility. And he also seems to hold that sin is so far necessary as a sort of natural evolution of good. "Much of the sin of the world is but a part of the stupendous process of evolution, the working out of the brute, the tiger, and the ape, as Tennyson has it, that the man be evolved into harmonious and beautiful life." One may be surprised that such an idea of sin, an idea which belongs to the pantheistic school, rather than to a theist like Mr. Page Hopps, should be avowed by him, though it no doubt favours his view of

giving evolution time to work out this harmony. But to one who holds with the common school that evil is "only evil and that continually," there does not seem room for argument on such a basis.

Secondly, Mr. Page Hopps and this writer differ not less in regard to salvation itself than the standard of ultimate belief in religion. "What," he says, "if salvation is simply the process, wherever carried on, of the emancipation of the spirit-self from evil conditions?" "What if this is only one stage of his (man's) great existence—a rough marking out of the lines of his glorious life, to be filled in and perfected elsewhere?" Between those who hold an idea of salvation like this, or development of inherently good tendencies, and what on the common view is called redemption, a rescue from fall and ruin by one supreme effort of Almighty love and power, involving a scheme of Divine sacrifice in the person and work of a Divine Christ altogether *sui generis*, there is not enough of unity. To those who hold the Christian religion to be a stupendous vindication of Divine justice in the pardon of sin, connected with an equally mighty and supernatural regenerating force, there may come in as there cannot to others, the thought of limitation. Mr. Page Hopps speaks disparagingly of "a day of

grace." But how can those argue with him who suppose that the very greatness of salvation makes the neglect of it fatal, or at least may do so, without, as he charges, changing the love of God into pitiless severity?

Thirdly, the idea of *grace* in connection with salvation also excludes argument. It is, indeed, very difficult to bind Mr. Page Hopps here to one position. At one time he speaks of salvation as demanded by justice. He speaks of "poor, sorrowful souls, whose earthly lives call aloud to the Creator for explanation and recompense, not punishment and hell." And again, "It is on that great word *justice* I now take my stand." Yet this is far from being his only line; and he admits also, as needful for his conclusion, the working of mercy. "The last of the causes of condemnation named is of course not without grave reasonableness, inasmuch as it points to the alienation of sin, which, while it lasts, must make impossible the true communion with the 'heavenly places.'" "We may be safe in saying that sin, while it lasts, must exclude the evil from communion with the good; but is there any reason for saying that he who ends as a sinner here, however impenitent, can never come into relations of mercy and helpfulness with holy spirits?" Now it can hardly be

supposed that a part of the human race, according to Mr. Page Hopps, *must* have an extended period of salvation on the ground of justice, while another part *may* have it on the ground of mercy. We have, therefore, to choose; and thus, apparently, as his language is strongest on the side of justice, it is to be held that here, literally, he takes his "stand." But if this be so, the present writer does not see any basis of argument: for unless it be held that a sinner has a right to salvation, and to all in the way of extended opportunity and gracious effort that God can grant, there is no room for debate: and this cannot be conceded without abolishing the idea of salvation as by grace. It is remarkable that after all Mr. Page Hopps allows a possible failure of salvation. "It is true that a dim margin remains, wherein may be sorrowful possibilities of hopeless moral and spiritual bankruptcy; but, admitting that to the fullest extent, may we not still fall back on the as yet unrevealed mighty forces of good in the universe, and confidently hope and believe that 'good *will* be the final goal of ill'?" This is quite inconsistent with a stand on justice, for we must do more than *hope* that God will save men if justice demand it, whereas this language can be used rightly in regard to mercy, where we do not

know its laws and limits. But this remark is only made by the way, and as showing how far Mr. Page Hopps is from unity. His exception does not suffice for argument on the basis of a common belief in salvation, wherever it is found, being by grace or mercy.

If, then, a start be made from the principle that salvation involves Divine grace both in pardon and in the working of an inward change, requiring, of course, a willingness to be saved on the part of those who have departed from God, the question of limits on every side belongs to God to determine, as to means, as to time, and as to every other specification. The only proposition that can be logically opposed to this is, that God cannot permit any lost creature in any circumstances to remain unsaved. This is logical universalism. But then it has always hitherto been argued on grounds, which seemed to involve the wider universalism, that God cannot permit any creature to exist which can possibly fall into a state of sin and ruin; and as this conclusion is notoriously false, the other has always shared its insecurity; and as men are in God's world manifestly in sin and ruin, for reasons which we cannot understand, they may, for reasons which we can as little understand, remain in it, and yet in harmony with God's attri-

butes. What we want to know is the question of fact as to the future ; and, as God can alone inform us what He will graciously do, we must, therefore, be guided far more by the revelation of His will than by any abstract reasoning from His attributes, such as we see has failed us in regard to the entrance and continuance of evil. So far as confessions of faith go, in churches that have had any confession on the subject, the universal belief of the Christian Church has been, that there is, with a special dispensation or covenant of grace in Christ the Mediator, also a special time or day of grace, which ends with the last judgment, and of which the issues are then brought forth as fixed and unchangeable. But the largest confessions practically equalise death and judgment, the Roman Church not allowing any saving change to be begun, but only worked out, in purgatory, the Lutheran confessions not speaking of any enlargement of the saved in the intermediate state, though individual theologians have done so ; and important confessions of the Reformed Churches, in terms, excluding it. There no doubt has been somewhat more latitude, taking individual opinions, in regard to the possibility of salvation in the intermediate state than after judgment. But, till recent times, this has been as a marking feature,

rare and exceptional. This, the present writer thinks, can only be accounted for by the strength of Scripture evidence for the common belief; and as adhering to this, he briefly states his estimate of texts as to him alone decisive of the question. This, it will be remembered, is not the question of restoration, though it has been chiefly argued by Mr. Page Hopps on Restorationist grounds, or of Conditional Immortality, or of purgatory, but of salvation as possible to begin after death.

As in connection with the finality of salvation as limited by judgment, the teaching of our Lord is the most impressive in the New Testament, so also as limited by death. In regard to judgment, the scene in Matthew xxv. is the strongest argument for a final separation; and the force cannot easily be resisted of the parable of the ten virgins, where the door is shut and will not be opened; and of the other striking passages, like Luke xiv. 25, where entrance is denied after the master of the house "has risen up and shut to the door." These cannot indeed be pleaded with the same authority in favour of the termination of the dispensation of grace by death, but it is worthy of notice that judgment proceeds in our Lord's description upon things transacted in time, and not after it; and it is in connection with a Christian profession, under "the

kingdom of heaven," which is made in these words, "We have eaten and drunk in thy presence," that the possibility of later entrance is denied. Still more distinct in the direction of salvation limited by time is our Lord's mention of His own preaching as deciding at the judgment the destinies of those who should refuse to imitate the repentance of Nineveh; His lamentations over Capernaum and over Jerusalem, where the mention of a "day" and a "time of visitation" cannot reasonably be restricted to mere temporal deliverance; and His solemn appeal to His hearers in John xii. 35, "Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you." It is not a natural meaning to put upon verse 48, that there is in it a possible reversal in the intermediate state. "He that rejecteth Me, and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." This is excluded by the parallel text in the same Gospel, which equalises death and judgment (viii. 24), "If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall *die* in your sins." It is in the light of this, and a great deal more in our Lord's teaching, that the parable of the rich man and Lazarus is to be studied. What is the meaning of the "great gulf" fixed, if conversions in the intermediate state

were to be constant? why are the rich man's anxieties not soothed down? and why is the still prevalent complaint that sinners have too few and too brief opportunities of salvation so solemnly in his case denied? So long as these utterances of our Lord, with all the earnestness of love, urge immediate salvation and spread such a horizon of menace and gloom beyond the earthly future, so long will it be difficult for those who take Him as their guide to believe that salvation is possible after death.

In other parts of the New Testament the same serious lesson seems to be equally urged. The Apostle Paul distinctly selects the present time (2 Cor. vi. 2) as "the accepted time" and "the day of salvation." He speaks of the judgment-seat of Christ as dealing with and making us receive "the things through the body" (*τὰ διὰ τοῦ σώματος*) (2 Cor. v. 10). He limits the effect of salvation and destruction to the Gospel ministry as if no succeeding force of recovery were in the field (2 Cor. iv. 3): "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," and as if the blinding, which he goes on to speak of, were final. Nothing will meet this but a universal doctrine of restoration, which some have ascribed to the Apostle, but which all the advocates of Conditional Immortality,

as well as others, refuse. The same doctrine of the limitation of salvation to this life seems to be distinctly taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Thus (ii. 3) what meaning is so natural of the words "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" The earnest exhortation of the third and fourth chapters seems wholly founded upon a limited time, called after the Old Testament parallel in Psalm xcv. "to-day": for though the "to-day" lasts to successive generations, the opportunity of using it by faith seems as much limited to one life, as in the case of those in the wilderness who by unbelief provoked exclusion from rest. Another weighty text in this Epistle is ix. 27: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." The revision, leaving out the article, and rendering "and after this *cometh* judgment," makes no difference, as the unique character of the judgment is established by the context: and thus as Christ's coming again is but a bringing out of what was sealed by His death, so the judgment in the case of men is a bringing out of what is accomplished at theirs. In this point of view, the text is equivalent to that of Second Corinthians, which connects judgment with things done in the body.

This series of texts, to which others might be

added, does not seem met by any Scripture testimony of like weight on the other side. It is needless to consider general restorationist texts, which only less directly bear on the issue. Of those of a more special kind which have been relied on as favouring salvation after death, the two following may be briefly noticed: the forgiving of sin in "the life to come" (Matt. xii. 32), and the "preaching to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 13-20). The first of these, however, is uncertain, because there is no unambiguous reference anywhere to pardon in a life to come; and hence room is left for the view, as setting forth the unpardonableness of sin against the Holy Ghost, that the exclusion is equivalent to our proverbial "here and hereafter." As when our Lord speaks of "paying the last mite," which was not possible, may not a similar case be here proverbially expressed? The words, standing by themselves, might agree with forgiveness after death; but they do not teach it more than the emphatic denial of the pardonableness of a particular sin.

The celebrated text as to the "spirits in prison," might also be consistent with forgiveness after death if corroborated by any unambiguous testimony. No one can almost venture to say that this text supports the view often founded on it,

as much as the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus supports the other. It is confessedly one of the most difficult texts in the New Testament. The present writer does not know one view in which he can rest. The understanding of our Lord's proclamation in 1 Pet. iii. 19, as the same with the admitted preaching of the Gospel in 1 Pet. iv. 6, where the word is different, and the "spirits in prison" as the same with "the dead" there, have in recent times given this passage more of a favourable bearing on the question of salvation after death. But the one of these identifications is not certain. The other seems excluded by the large meaning of "the dead," as the same with the dead in general, as opposed to the "quick;" and the whole of this verse is also so obscure at once as to its supposed meaning, and the extraction of any inferences from its alleged connection with 1 Pet. iii. 18-20, as to impose great caution in founding on it any doctrine. One can sympathise so far with the desire to represent Christ as graciously active in the state of the dead, and also to cast light, more than seems to have been revealed, on any point of contact between Him and those who have never heard His name. But to stretch the fair meaning of Scripture texts is not the way to fill up any desiderata or obviate any difficulties;

and it is even needful to protest against the style in which, in the hands of some, one or two long controverted passages are so decided in favour of a wide, if not universal hearing or re-hearing of the Gospel after death, as greatly to weaken, if not obliterate the amazing privilege of a day of grace, and to abate the paramount duty, while it lasts, of working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

This paper may be concluded with a very impressive quotation from Bishop Ellicott's commentary, where the writer, Canon Boyd Carpenter, on Rev. xxii. 11, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still," &c., says, "Is it not the declaration of the ever-terrible truth that men are building up their destiny by the actions and habits of their lives? 'Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.' The righteous become righteous, the godly become godly; so slowly but surely may the power of being masters of our fate pass out of our hands. It is in this law of our nature that the key to many of the darkest problems of the future may lie; and not without a solemn declaration of this law does the Book of Revelation close."

ARTICLE VII.

BY THE REV. EDWARD WHITE.

IN modern times salvation is taken to signify the deliverance of a sinner, who is by nature an immortal, from the guilt, power, and eternal consequences of sin. God freely bestows upon him pardon, sanctification, redemption of the body, and eternal glory, and so "saves" him. Infants, who have not "sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," are said in like manner to be saved, because they have inherited a corrupt but immortal nature, and with it a liability, under the law, to endless sin and misery. This was the doctrine of Augustine, and it was no doubt intended to be taught by the framers of the Anglican article on *Original Sin*, which is said to "deserve God's wrath and damnation." But baptized infants, dying in infancy, are "undoubtedly saved," according to the rubric of baptism.

It is impossible for me to write on this subject without confessing at the outset that I understand the word salvation as having a still deeper mean-

ing in the New Testament, and that its fundamental idea is the gift not simply of pardon, holiness, and glory to a sinful being, whether in adult age or in infancy, but of immortal life, which the human race does not possess by nature. So that to be saved signifies to be saved alive in body and soul from death eternal, saved from that extinction, or *φθορά*, which is represented as the doom of the "beasts which perish," and ultimately, in Gehenna, of all men who resemble them in a merely psychical life (Gal. vi. 8, 2 Pet. ii. 12 (Gr.), Rom. viii. 12). Salvation in Scripture is set over against destruction. "There is One Lawgiver who is able to *save and to destroy*." "Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to *save a life* or to *destroy it*?"

In the Syriac version of the New Testament (the language of Palestine in Christ's time), the Greek words for the verb to save and the noun salvation are nearly always represented by the verb *to give life* and the noun *life*.*

2. In this sense, then, I take the question:—Is salvation (the gift of immortal life in the image of the King Eternal and Invisible, through regeneration or biogenesis) possible after death? This is not to ask whether it is the rule of the Divine

* See an able series of papers in the *Rainbow* for 1884, by Mr. James Holding, in which this is abundantly proved. (Elliot Stock.)

government to bestow this unspeakable gift on all alike who die in their sins; but whether it is possible for any who die in a state of nature to be visited by the Divine grace with an opportunity of salvation in Hades. I hold that this possibility is as clearly revealed in the New Testament as many other important truths, and that the vindication of it from modern Protestant opposition is an essential portion of the glad tidings which are to be preached in all nations, especially in the heathen world. The omission of any integral part of the New Testament theology renders more difficult the acceptance of all the rest. The omission of any of the more benignant elements of revelation has a fatal effect in rendering more difficult of reception the terrible menaces of the Almighty, by which men are to be moved to immediate repentance and flight from the "wrath to come." They argue from the admitted difficulty respecting heathen damnation to their own immunity from danger.

3. In venturing to offer a judgment on this solemn question I must first express complete agreement with Professor Stanley Leathes, Dr. M'Ewan, and Dr. Cairns, in their conviction that the general tone of the teaching of our Lord, and of all His Apostles, no less than their specific declarations, in the most distinct manner supports

the doctrine now generally prevailing among Protestants, that the rule of the Divine government under Christianity, is to limit the possibility of salvation by the "day of grace," in the case of those who have had the demand for repentance and the offers of the Gospel of peace adequately presented to them. The mode in which Christ and the Apostles presented the Gospel differs much from that which is now too common. Christ insists everywhere on immediate repentance; on a man's turning from his sins at the first warning of judgment to come; on his closing with the mercy of God without delay. Setting aside the case of the young, the sudden "conversion" of bad men is the rule, not the exception, in His plan, as it is in life the only possible mode of salvation for the sinful multitude, as the *Spectator* newspaper lately rightly affirmed. Delay is treated as of the nature of wilful disobedience, obstinate rebellion against the Almighty,—“presumptuous sin.” There is no sign in the New Testament of impenitent persons being invited to “take sittings” at church, to listen during a lifetime to the repeated threatenings and promises of heaven. The tone of the teaching is this, *To-day, or Nevermore!* “To-day is the day of salvation.” Those who postpone attention to the Infinite Being to a “more con-

venient season," are given over to be "hardened," that is, to become gradually more and more insensible to the truth, and to their own danger; just as the men of Sodom were first struck blind, and then destroyed in the sulphurous darkness. Modern teaching by no means represents the striking peremptoriness of the Apostolic demand for immediate repentance and faith. As little does it represent the awful denunciations launched at those who refuse instant submission to the Creator's will and the Redeemer's message, "O that thou hadst heard, even thou *in this thy day*, the things that belong unto thy peace. But now they are hidden from thine eyes." "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish" — or vanish! "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves *unworthy of everlasting life*, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."

It is needless to repeat the careful citations of Scripture set forth by Dr. S. Leathes, Dr. M'Ewan, and Dr. Cairns proving this point. If such Scriptures as Christ's parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus in Hades, are to be taken in their obvious sense, they are surely designed to teach us that after death follows an irrevocable judgment on those to whom the "Word of God has come" in their lifetime. For all who thus rejected Moses

and the prophets there was a "great gulf fixed" between themselves and salvation. For those who "tread under foot the blood" of Christ, a "sorer judgment" and an "everlasting destruction." There is precisely the same reason for relying on the execution of the threatenings of God, as on the fulfilment of His promises, namely, the faithfulness of God to His Word. All the lines of evidence which lead to faith in Christianity run close up to the margin of eternity, and assure us of the terrors which are there for those who "do iniquity," and reject the Son of God; "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," said St. Paul, leading not to salvation, but to death and destruction. It is inconceivable that if God spake by the prophets, the God of Glory has threatened lightly, or without deliberation, or recoils from His own declarations. Doubtless the declared intention of God will be fulfilled, in the judgment of those who have *turned away from Him that speaketh from heaven*. And this declared intention is uniformly that they shall perish, be destroyed body and soul in Gehenna, shall die, shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, shall be punished with everlasting destruction. It is indeed "the burden of the Lord" so to believe; but I must abandon all hope of understanding a revelation in words if these

terms consist with any hope of the "salvation" of such persons as they concern.

I conceive, therefore, that it is difficult to describe adequately our guilt as public teachers if we encourage the modern well-instructed contemners of God and of Christ to expect a future probation, or a new opportunity of salvation in Hades.

Nothing is more required just now than a recovery of St. Paul's tone in "reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," before which even the iron Felix trembled; and no sin of the teacher can be greater than in any way to promise life "to those who are doing despite to the Spirit of grace." Religious teachers who were bent on men-pleasing were of old the objects of Christ's heaviest maledictions; and surely the rarity of the conversion and repentance of men and women of the middle and artizan classes in our time, indicates a style of public preaching which *encourages* fearlessness, and will incur the execution on the faithless watchmen of judgments such as those denounced by the Son of God on the educated "scribes of Jerusalem." *Is not my Word as a fire, saith the Lord, and as a hammer which breaketh the rock in pieces? What is the straw to the wheat? saith the Lord.* The terrific element in nature and revelation is now almost ignored by

multitudes, in the name of the Fatherhood of God. God's mercy is profanely set against His truthfulness and His justice. "My heart within me is broken because of the prophets."

4. But the dealings of God with men in the matter of destiny are individual and personal. Men do not undergo eternal judgment indiscriminately in masses. I think the whole record of Revelation proceeds on the general principle that those who enjoy the clear light of a Divine revelation in their mind and conscience, enjoy it as the result of a special and sovereign predestination thereto, and will have no other opportunity of salvation than the present life. But the question at once arises, Are there not multitudes of persons, even in Christendom, who cannot be said to have had the demand for repentance and the offer of Divine mercy presented to them in such a manner as to enable them to recognise its Divine source or to feel its compelling influence? Shall all those persons who have lived and died in sin, in ignorance, in misery, be hopelessly abandoned to the doom denounced on those who have "disobeyed the Gospel," and "closed their ears" against the Word of life? The pungent and affecting language of Mr. Page Hopps' closing paragraphs seems to me to carry irresistible force. Have not millions

of persons, even in Christendom, been deprived of the knowledge of God through ignorance, caused by the neglect or wicked perversions of their professed teachers, as truly as any of the heathen; more completely indeed than many of the so-called heathen in the philosophic Eastern world? What does the Apostolic Revelation teach concerning those to whom the Word of God never came? Is salvation after death impossible for any of these innumerable multitudes of mankind in Christendom or Heathendom?

5. This brings me to the point where I am compelled to part company with the distinguished professors with whom, up to this, I have agreed. For they have all three, while in some expressions drawing very near to the requisite admissions, ended by apparently dismissing ideas which are absolutely necessary for the successful public maintenance of the awful truth, of the finality of probation for hearers of the Gospel, which they have so powerfully defended.

Nothing is of greater importance with a view to bring home with power to the public conscience the terribleness, the certainty, and the remediless finality of future judgment, for those who have "heard the Word of God" but have refused it by persevering in presumptuous sin, than to set forth

with equal clearness the testimony of Holy Scripture concerning the equity and mercy of the Divine dealings with those who have lived and died in ignorance.

Throughout the Law of Moses "sins of ignorance" are distinguished by a sharp line from "presumptuous sins." The spirit of equitable consideration runs through the whole structure of the Law, though its penalties on wilful and daring transgression are of inexorable severity.

In the historical books of the Old Testament, God is ever represented as dealing tenderly and mercifully with ignorant persons. He teaches Jonah a lesson of compassion for the ignorant myriads of Nineveh, by causing him to reflect on his own compassion for a withered gourd. "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are sixty thousand persons *that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?*" Surely the same law of Divine compassion applies to all cities and villages on earth that may be similarly described.

Again, in Christ's teaching, the possession of knowledge and privilege is always taken as constituting quite a distinct category in probation. In that awful parable of Dives and Lazarus, in which Christ teaches the irreversible doom of those who have rejected revelation and sinned against

light, he represents Abraham as refusing to send a warning ghost to the brethren of the lost man, because "*they have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.*" Clearly indicating that it is the possession of knowledge here which constitutes the sufficient ground for refusing further advantages towards salvation. Its absence, therefore, may assuredly be taken as a reason for believing that those who have been deprived of it by the sin of their wicked teachers, or through their hereditary heathenism, come under a different rule whether in judgment or mercy.

But why stand to argue the question on abstract grounds, when we have the two great Apostles of Christ agreeing to lay down statements in which is positively asserted the infinitely important distinction in Divine treatment between those who "knew their Lord's will" and those "who knew it not."

6. Before proceeding to examine these statements, however, it is necessary to refer to the case of children dying in infancy, as throwing light upon the wider principle of spiritual illumination in Hades. Infant baptism had its origin in the desire to communicate everlasting life by a rite believed to convey the gift of the Regenerating Spirit; and there is no example in early Christian

antiquity of infant baptism conferred with any other design than this—to “save” by regeneration.

The quite modern Nonconformist idea of infant baptism, as simply a “mark of catechumens,” was utterly unknown in the first four centuries of Christianity. Bishop Bethel’s challenge on this subject has never, I think, been answered by the pædobaptist Nonconformists.*

Hence those in the churches of Rome and England, who practise this rite agree with the rubric that such baptized children dying in infancy are “undoubtedly saved.” But there are millions of good Christians in Christendom, both pædobaptist and anti-pædobaptist, among whom children die, as elsewhere. What becomes of them? What becomes of those who die in the birth before baptism, or before birth, when baptism was impossible? Does the circumstance of seeing the light, or of not seeing it, determine *eternal destiny*? “No,” say those good people in all lands, “all children dying in infancy are undoubtedly saved.” They are regenerated by the Spirit, either in the act of dying, as Dr. M’Ewan thinks, or afterwards in Hades. As for their regeneration in the act of dying, it is a notion for which there is no evidence whatever. It is an assertion made in good faith, but purely for the

* In his great work on Baptismal Regeneration.

purpose of avoiding the inevitable conclusion that the regeneration of the soul takes place afterwards in the intermediate state, whether accomplished by an instantaneous act or by a course of education and development.

Even if the act of grace were applied one second after dissolution, there would be an example of salvation being possible after death. And such must be the truth respecting innumerable millions of departed infant souls, if they are saved at all. So that since the souls of children who have died greatly exceed the number of adults who die, if they are all saved, as is commonly said, then there are more human beings saved by regeneration after death than before it. And this fact, if it be established in but a single instance, opens the door of hope for others besides, "who knew not their right hand from their left," or knew not of God's mercy to the penitent.

7. Now let us listen to St. Paul addressing the Court of Areopagus at Athens in his famous speech on the dissipation of "Agnosticism" by the Divine Revelation in Jesus Christ (Acts xvii.) Standing in the very centre and capital of pagan idolatry, he surveys the past and contrasts it with the present. "*In times past,*" as He had declared to the Lycaonians (Acts xiv. 16), God "*suffered all nations to*

walk in their own ways," and not only so, but He had withheld direct revelation from the majority, abandoning them to the light of nature and the teaching of heaven and earth, "if so be they might feel after him and find him," a result indeed possible, but not attained by the generality. Then he adds the remarkable words which formed a portion even of this short introductory discourse to the Athenians, and which ought to form a portion of almost every sermon when men are insisting on the awful penalties of rejecting known Divine revelation,—“but the times of this ignorance God *winked at*,” (R. V. *overlooked*) (Gr. *ὑπερίδων ὁ θεὸς*); overlooked clearly in the sense of not bringing the world into final judgment solely on the basis of their ignorant heathenism. Thus the word is used in the Septuagint (Lev. xx. 4): “If the people of the land *hide their eyes from* the man (*ὑπερίδωσιν*) when he giveth his seed to Moloch, and kill him not;” *i.e.*, overlook his offences and *fail to punish him*, &c. If all the ignorant millions who had died in heathenism were to be consigned to hell (as Xavier taught the Japanese that they would be) it could not have been said by Paul that God had *hidden His eyes from*, or *overlooked*, or *winked at*, or *passed by*, their ignorance.

This statement, then, so solemnly made at Athens

by the Apostle of the Gentiles, inevitably carries us to the belief in the probability, at all events, of some operation of mercy on behalf of the departed spirits of *ignorant* heathen men, by Him who says in the Mosaic Law that "He loveth the stranger," the foreigner, and that His "tender mercies are over all His works." Among the ancient pagan nations, indeed, were thousands of men who could not be called ignorant; such as the illustrious teachers of the schools of China, India, Greece, and Egypt. Many of these possessed signal advantages for the knowledge of God and of the pardon of sin, partly through reason, partly through tradition, partly through contact with those who enjoyed direct revelation. If such men as these led wicked lives, notwithstanding their illumination, and added the crime of supporting the debasing popular heathenisms, against their own consciences, they would "perish without law," just as wicked men under the patriarchal age, rejecting clear, if limited, Gospel light on Divine things (Heb. iv. 2) would perish also. This would be but correlative to the truth that multitudes of regenerate and God-fearing souls "in every nation" of antiquity, "working righteousness," were, in spite of limited knowledge, "accepted" and saved by their faith in their lifetime, through the unknown virtue of that Sacrifice

of God in Christ, one day to be offered "for the whole world."

But for the ignorant residuum—the multitudes of whom Mr. Page Hopps reminds us—there was an "overlooking" of their sin, because of their "ignorance." But how could it be overlooked if they all must needs perish? We are, therefore, compelled to believe that an education in truth and grace awaited the majority of them beyond, as in the cases of children, already spoken of. So that salvation, at least in these instances, was "possible after death."

8. We now turn to the testimony of the other great Apostle of the Gospel, St. Peter, to whom "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" were specially "given" by Him that "hath the keys of Hades and of death" (Rev. i. 18); who "openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." The authentic origin of the first Epistle of Peter is undisputed. No one thinks of setting aside its testimony in any other part, because, as Professor Stanley Leathes expresses it, it is "obscure, disputed, and mysterious;" so that it is "unwise to build anything upon it." What would Archbishop Leighton have said if Professor Leathes had spoken in such terms of the rest of this sacred writing? This Epistle has always been a favourite

with devout readers because of its simplicity, clearness of expression, and evangelical fervour in tone. There is in it nothing mystical, involved, or rhapsodical, nothing unintelligible in any other portion. The presumption, therefore, is in favour of the easiest sense of the passage now to be considered. There are, moreover; no various readings in the Greek original, in the most ancient manuscripts, in the slightest degree affecting the interpretation. And lastly, the singularity, or novelty of the statement made, is no reason for explaining it away. There are several "keys of the kingdom of heaven," and one of them opens Hades. Many of the greater revelations of Christianity are given in single passages only, without repetition, as, for example, St. Paul's account of the order of events at Christ's second advent. Yet no one thinks of rejecting such revelations because they are not repeated elsewhere. The questions really are, Did St. Peter write these verses? and what do they signify? The first requires no discussion. The second can be ascertained by a straightforward exegesis. And no preconceived notions, psychological or theological, ought to stand in the way of receiving St. Peter's words, writing by the Spirit of Revelation. He was far too holy a man to write an important passage like this, which was

so certain to be understood by mankind to teach the possibility of the salvation of some after death, if that doctrine were a "dangerous speculation," as some of my predecessors suppose. That it has been so understood, in its simplest sense of Christ's descent into Hades, by "the great majority of ancient and modern readers," as Dean Alford declares, admits of no contradiction. Well may this candid and learned writer sum up his powerful critical comment on the passage by saying: "It will be gathered from all which has been said that, with the great majority of commentators, ancient and modern, I understand these words to say that our Lord, in His disembodied state, did go to the place of departed spirits, and did then commence His work of redemption, preach salvation, in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the Flood was hanging over them." "It is wise to deal with the plain words of Scripture, and to accept its revelations as far as they are vouchsafed to us; and they are vouchsafed to us to the utmost limit of legitimate inference from revealed facts. That inference every intelligent reader will draw from the fact here announced. It is not purgatory, it is not universal restitution, but it is one which throws blessed light on one of the darkest enigmas

of the Divine justice, the cases where the final doom seems infinitely out of proportion to the lapse which has incurred it. And as we cannot say to what other cases this preaching to the spirits may have applied, so it would be presumption in us to limit its occurrence or its efficiency. The reason of mentioning here these sinners of the antediluvian world, above other sinners, appears to be their connection with the type of baptism which follows" (Alford, Gr. Test., vol. iv., p. 368).

The passage in question (1 Pet. iii. 18-22 ; iv. 1-6) is as follows in the Revised Version :—

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God ; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (or made alive) in the spirit ; in which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing ; wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water : which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism ; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation (or inquiry, or appeal) of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ; who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven ; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.

"Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm ye yourselves also with the same mind ; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin ; that ye no longer should live the rest of your time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past may suffice to have wrought the desire of the Gentiles, and to have walked in lasciviousness,

lusts, winebibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatries; wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them into the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the living and the dead ($\nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\upsilon\delta\epsilon\varsigma$). For unto this end were the good tidings preached even to the dead ($\nu\epsilon\kappa\rho\omicron\iota\tilde{\varsigma}$), that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live ($\zeta\tilde{\omega}\sigma\iota\nu$, *may live*, the present subjunctive) according to God in the spirit."

In these words St. Peter explicitly declares that *when Christ died in the flesh* He was still alive in the spirit, and in the spirit went and preached glad tidings to the spirits of dead men in the prison of the abyss, (see the same word prison, or $\phi\upsilon\lambdaακ\eta$), applied to the subterranean place of detention of Satan during the millennium, Rev. xx. 7), who had once been disobedient in the days of Noah. And in the sixth verse of the fourth chapter St. Peter assigns the reason why the spirits of the dead were thus evangelised, even of those who, at the flood, died in disobedience; "in order that they might be judged after the manner of men in the flesh, but meanwhile *be living* according to God in the spirit" (indicating a life going on now).

Here then is a plain and, I think, an inspired statement that some of the ancient dead who had died in rebellion, in the childhood of humanity, were evangelised, had the "Gospel preached to them" by the Spirit of the Saviour in the prison of Hades.

And the reason given carries us still further. They had the Gospel preached to them in Hades in order *that they might be judged by Jesus Christ*, and judged like men in the flesh (namely, those "living" on earth when Christ returns from heaven), by the same rule as others who had this Gospel on earth, that is, *by the Gospel message itself*; so that they would not necessarily perish under the Law, but *may live*, enter into life, "according to God in the spirit."

But this necessarily involves a principle of wider application, the presentation of the Gospel to the spirits of other dead men who are to be judged by Jesus Christ "according to the Gospel" at the last day (Rom. ii.) By these words a flood of light is thrown upon the Divine dealings with multitudes of those who have died in darkness or twilight. Every human spirit survives. It may be that "no soul reaches the crucial point of its probation" (as the orthodox Professor Godet himself suggests in his comment on Luke xvi. 25), "till it has come into contact with the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ for acceptance or rejection. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is, perhaps, the condition of final judgment for every soul." "He who does not believe in the Son," says Monsieur Delon, a distinguished French pastor of the south, "has not the life;"—

but not to believe implies that one has been placed in a position to decide for or against Christ, and cannot be applied to those to whom this alternative has never been proposed. It is here we should recall the Saviour's declaration, "*If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin*" (John xv. 22).

"No thoughtful Christian," says Canon Spence, (*Bible Educator*, i. 118), "can resist the persuasion that the blessed preaching was not limited to those who perished at the Deluge, but that those unhappy ones were selected simply as a sample of a like gracious work in others." It may be, as St. Peter suggests, their case was a hard one. Only "eight," a few, out of a world of millions, were saved by water in the ark. A vast number may now be "saved" if believers by baptism here, or by the preaching of the Gospel to departed spirits hereafter. The antediluvians too had been the earliest consigned to the abyss of darkness and silence of all those souls departed whom Ezekiel describes as in Sheol (chap. xxxiii.). To them Christ first preached the Gospel, that being perhaps the sufficient work for the brief period between the days of His death and resurrection—the further work of evangelising the rest of the ancient dead, who had died without knowledge of salvation, being possibly

performed during the forty days after His revivification. This is indeed pure conjecture, but it deserves attention as showing that the plain sense of the passage need not be rejected because of the difficulty occasioned by the exclusive mention of the antediluvians. This extended view of our Lord's preaching is no mere outcoming of modern thought, but was held in the early Church with different modifications by writers like Hermas, Clement of Alexandria, Irenæus, and Justin Martyr. The same interpretation of St. Peter is favoured by the new evangelical schools of Germany, England, and America. "This movement of opinion," says M. Chaponnière (Professor in the College of Geneva), "of which the two principal organs have been J. L. Kœnig of Mayence, and E. Güder of Berne, has been favoured by many theologians of repute, such as the exegetes Neander, Steiger, Olshausen, Stier, C. F. Schmid, and B. Weiss; and by the theologians Knapp, Hahn, Nitzsch, Lange, Ebrard, and Martensen." A very learned summary of their arguments was presented by Dr. E. Petavel of Geneva, in the *Chrétien Evangelique* for March 1881.

On the whole then I agree with Professors S. Leathes and Cairns that it is of infinite moment to maintain the awful New Testament doctrine of the finality of probation for those who have heard on

earth the preaching of the Gospel of the Son of God, and who have either rejected or neglected it. But it is of equal importance for the vindication of the righteousness of God, to maintain and proclaim simultaneously the "possibility of salvation after death" of those who have not heard, clearly and fully, this Gospel of salvation on earth, much less refused or neglected it. The result of such opportunity may not always be their salvation. If the character of the miserable *daimonia*, or unclean spirits in the Gospel narratives, (believed by both the Jews and Christians of the Apostolic Age to be *certain wandering souls of wicked men*, permitted to escape from the "abyss"—see Luke viii. 31), may be taken as evidence of the relation of such departed spirits to Christ, it is evident that the visitation of Divine grace may, in many instances, not result in faith or salvation. The practical conclusion is that all should at once "awake to righteousness;" that no man should delay immediate repentance and reception of the Saviour; since Divine Revelation offers no hope of a prolongation of the "day of grace" in the "prison" to which such disobedient spirits are consigned until the "time" arrives of their "torment" and "destruction" (Matt. viii. 29). "*Now they are hidden from thine eyes.*"

ARTICLE VIII.

BY THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP WEATHERS.

ON this subject it is all important that there should be no misconception. For should it be proclaimed, without any authority from Heaven, that there is in the next life a second probation awaiting those who have in this life failed to secure the salvation of their souls, and should men be found to lend a willing ear to this doctrine, not because they are convinced by the force of any arguments brought forward in support of it, but because they wish to believe it true, there is a terrible awakening in store for them when, too late, they discover in another world they have suffered themselves to be deluded into a false sense of security and to be betrayed into a fatal irretrievable error.

For a religious controversy to be carried on to any good purpose, it is necessary for those who enter into it to be in agreement upon certain first principles of belief. The writer of the following pages addresses his argument to such as believe in

supernatural religion and recognise the Divine authority of sacred Scripture. He begins by explaining what, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church, is meant by salvation, and what is held to be a necessary condition for the attainment of it.

Man was made for a happiness transcending the order of nature, and derived from his being united inseparably to God. To this end he was endowed, from the beginning, with the supernatural life of grace. This gift did not belong, as of right, to man's nature, but was to become his indefeasibly and inalienably on the fulfilment of certain prescribed conditions. Unhappily these conditions were not fulfilled, and man, by the loss of grace, lost the spiritual bond of union that subsisted between himself and God. But all, and more than all, that we had forfeited by the disobedience of the first Adam, we have recovered by the obedience of the second Adam, who came to be the restorer of our race. We have been made once more the sons of God. We have been furnished with the supernatural helps we require to be able to walk in a manner worthy of God. And provided we persevere faithfully in the observance of the Divine commandments, and are found at the time of our departure out of this world in the possession of the

grace of God, whereby, according to the Apostle (2 Peter i. 4), we are made partakers of the Divine nature, we shall enter into the joy of our Lord. We may, indeed, according to Catholic teaching, have yet to wait for a time before we are put in possession of this happiness. For if we depart out of this life in the grace of God, but are not entirely free from all stains of sin, those stains must be purged away before the soul can be admitted into that kingdom where nothing defiled can enter. Nevertheless, it is true to say of all who depart this life in the grace of God that they are of the number of the saved. They have made their calling and election sure. On the other hand, it is the teaching of the Catholic Church that all who have rejected the proffered gift of God's grace, or who, having received this grace, have afterwards fallen away from it, and have been surprised by death in the state of sin, will remain in that state ever after. But may not the sinner repent hereafter of the evil he has done? Undoubtedly all sinners will bitterly lament their past folly because of the sad consequences which it has brought upon them (Wisdom v. 3). But they cannot raise themselves by mere natural sorrow to a supernatural state. And without being raised to a supernatural state it is impossible for them to see God (1 Tim. vi. 16). Grace

is necessary for this end. Christ tells us, no man can come to me except the Father draw him. But for all who have departed out of this life the time of grace, the day of salvation, is past. Sinners have reached their final destiny. In the pathetic words of Jeremiah they exclaim, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Now this doctrine, which has been all along the common belief of Christians, seems to be in perfect accord with the teaching of our Lord. To cite one single text, Go, said He to His Apostles, teach the Gospel to every creature. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. And he that believeth not shall be condemned." I do not stop to show that the faith of which our Lord here speaks is not an idle, barren faith—for faith without good works is dead—but a living faith which works by charity (Gal. v. 6). These words are quoted as testifying to the fact that there are two states in the life to come, fixed and permanent. The one state comprises those who have been born again of water and the Holy Ghost—elsewhere we learn that there are other means available for the spiritual regeneration of those who are precluded from the use of the baptismal rite—and have lived and died in the faith and obedience of the Son of God. To the other state belong, first, those who have never received

the faith; of these it is written that "they are already judged," inasmuch as they have never been delivered from the sentence passed upon all mankind. Secondly, those who are by profession Christians, but have not been in their lives true followers of Christ. Of these we are told many at the last day will say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful things?" And then will He declare to them, "I know you not, depart from me ye workers of iniquity." Our conclusion then is, first, that what is meant by being saved is attaining to that supernatural bliss for which man was created. It does not follow, however, that all who do not attain to supernatural bliss are excluded from all happiness. It is the common opinion of Catholic theologians—the Church has decided nothing on this point—that children dying unbaptized, and all others who are like to them in this respect, that they have not incurred the guilt of any personal sin of a grave nature, but yet have died without being raised to the supernatural life of faith, may attain to the state of natural beatitude. But the attainment of natural beatitude is not what is meant by being saved. Secondly, that what is held to be a necessary condition of salvation is, that one should be found at the end of his life on earth

—which is his allotted term of probation—in possession of God's grace. For by the possession of Divine grace we are made sons of God, and consequently heirs of His kingdom. Without this grace no one is capable of seeing and possessing God, wherein our 'salvation consists. The foregoing is a statement of what is the Catholic belief on this point.

The question, however, is raised, whether salvation is not attainable after death; in other words, whether God will not grant a second probation to those who have in this life been tried and found wanting. We cannot answer this question of ourselves; because whether God will do so or not depends absolutely upon His own free will. The possession of life eternal—which is what we mean by being saved—is not anything due to man's nature. It is the gift of God (Rom. vi. 23). If then we would know what we ought to believe in this matter, we must learn what He Himself has said on the subject.

There is, however, one argument of the advocates of the possibility of salvation after death which claims to be considered at the outset. No one, they say, can doubt that God, being good, has made man for happiness. But His wisdom and His power are equal to the accomplishment of the ends

which He has proposed to Himself ; therefore, however opposed to this doctrine certain texts of Scripture, taken by themselves, may appear to be, they must admit of having such an interpretation put upon them as will bring them into accord with the known purposes of God in the creation of man. This argument is built up on a false assumption. It takes for granted that the end which God had primarily in view in creating was the creature's happiness. But it was not so. The primary end of creation, that which was intended absolutely, and will, under all circumstances, be accomplished, is the showing forth of God's glory. The happiness of the creature is an end which is truly and really intended by God, but it is a secondary end, which He wills to be accomplished so far as the accomplishment of it is not incompatible with the fulfilment of the primary end, and not derogatory to the Divine honour. Reason teaches us this truth. God is infinitely great. The whole world, with all that it contains, is in His presence as if it had no being at all. He would then act against reason, if in anything He took no account of what was due to Himself ; if, *e.g.*, He created man for man's sake alone, without regard to His own glory. This same truth is explicitly declared in the revealed Word. We are there told that God is the Alpha

and Omega, the beginning and end of all things ; that "He has made all things for Himself, the wicked man also for the evil day" (Prov. xvi. 4 ; see also Rom. ix. 17).*

These words do not mean that God has predestined some men to destruction. Elsewhere it is written that "God desires not the death of the sinner," "that he would have all men to be saved." What they mean is that all things are made to proclaim their Maker's praise, and that they must needs fulfil the end of their creation. Hence, if men abuse their free will and render it impossible that God should show forth in them the effects of His goodness in bestowing upon them the riches of His grace, and admitting them into the Kingdom of His Glory, He will then show forth in them the greatness of His sanctity by the manifestation of the hatred He bears to sin. Now what has been said of the work of creation applies also to the work of redemption. The ends for which Christ came into the world were proclaimed by the song of the angelic choir, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to men of good will." To atone for the outrage done to God by sin, and to pay the debt of homage due from the creature to the Creator—this

* The Revised Version gives two readings for the first part of this text. One of them corresponds with that given above ; the second part it leaves unchanged.

was the primary end which Christ came to accomplish. He had also another end in view, viz., the salvation of man. But the accomplishment of this second end was made dependent upon certain conditions: "God sent his son into the world that the world might be saved through Him. He that believeth in Him is not judged. But he that believeth not is already judged."

There are some who have taken exception to this doctrine as though it implied an absence of all generous and disinterested love on the part of the Creator. But it is not so. God is our Father, He is our sovereign Lord. But is it not possible for a father in ruling his household, for a king in governing his people, to enforce the claim of justice without ceasing to be animated with a true spirit of disinterested love? Or can we deny the tender mercy and charity of Christ, who died for us when we were His enemies, but who is nevertheless set for the fall as well as for the resurrection of many in Israel; who was not satisfied with making us His servants, but must needs make us His friends, yet not absolutely so and irrespectively of all circumstances. You are, He says, My friends if you keep My commandments.

To return to the question of the possibility of salvation after death—whether it be consistent

with that regard which a God of infinite greatness must have to His own honour, whether it be consistent also with the honour due to His Divine Son—for the Father takes account of what is due to the honour of His Son (John viii. 52)—that the sinner, who during the time of his probation on earth has greatly outraged his Divine Lord and Master, who, in the strong language of the Apostle, has trodden under foot the blood of the Son of God, should be furnished again with the opportunities he has deliberately rejected, it is not in the power of any man to say. For an answer to this question we must go to the Word of God. There is, according to the belief of Catholics, both a written and an unwritten word—the sacred Scripture being the one, and Tradition the other, which, though prior in point of time (2 Tim. i. 14) is supplemental in its character, and serves, besides other needful purposes, to throw light upon much that in the former is difficult and obscure. But our appeal is here to the sacred Scriptures, which both Catholics and Protestants revere as the Word of God, and which the latter regard as containing all that is necessary for us to know in order to our salvation. What, then, is the teaching of Scripture upon this point? There are three different opinions as to what the teaching of Scripture is. One

opinion maintains that it is in accordance with Scripture to hold that *salvation is possible for all after death*; that those who have not accomplished the work of their salvation in this life will yet have an opportunity of accomplishing it in the next life. The second opinion is, that *salvation is possible after death for some, but not for all*; that a new trial and probation will be granted in the next life to those, and to those only, whose probation in this life has, for some particular cause, been inadequate. According to the third opinion, *salvation is not possible after death*, because the time of man's probation is limited to the present life. If the last opinion is shown to be true the other opinions are by the same arguments proved to be false. Nevertheless, it may be well to say something concerning each of them.

1. There are some who hold that *salvation is possible after death for all who need it*; that the sentence pronounced upon the wicked on the great Day of Judgment is not absolutely final; that God's mercy, triumphing in the end over His justice, will place them, after long suffering, in a new state of probation. They who hold this belief presumably hold it on other than scriptural grounds. Texts may be cited which speak of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, but these stand side by side

with others which bear witness to the awful severity of God's judgments on the wicked, such as those which record, *e.g.*, the destruction of the guilty cities of the plain, the drowning of a sinful world. They stand side by side with the declarations of the never-ending punishments of the wicked. Nowhere is there any hope of mercy held out to impenitent sinners. God is infinitely good, He is infinitely just, to His faithful servants He is bountiful beyond measure, a Father full of tender compassion to repenting sinners, but the impenitent are admonished and forewarned how terrible a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God. In a word, the Scripture, so far from sanctioning, condemns, as we shall see in many places, the doctrine we are speaking of.

2. The second opinion maintains that *salvation after death is possible in the case of some*. It declares that the Word of God holds out no hope in the future for those who have had the offer of salvation made to them in this life and have deliberately rejected it, but that it warrants the belief that those who, from the circumstances in which they have been placed, have not had in this world a probation adequate to the momentous character of the issue, will have a further probation after death. This opinion takes for granted that

there are a certain number in the world who are left destitute of the means necessary for working out their salvation, and proceeds upon this assumption to build up an exceptional scheme of redemption in their behalf. It must be admitted that children dying in infancy have had no probation. Of them we are bound certainly, in accordance with the declaration of our blessed Lord, to say that if they have not been spiritually regenerated they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. But then they have no claim to it. They have not by their nature the capacity of seeing God. On the other hand, since they have done nothing to forfeit that natural beatitude of which they are capable, we have every reason to believe that God in His goodness will bring them securely to the possession of it. In like manner we may reasonably expect that adults who, from whatever cause it may be, have never attained to the full maturity of their reasoning faculties, and have never been spiritually regenerated, will, so far as their case is parallel to that of children in this life, be found similar to them in their condition in the next life. But with those who are in possession of their full reasoning powers the case is different. If they remain in ignorance of Him who made them they are inexcusable (Rom. i. ; Wisdom xiii.) And if know-

ing God they refuse to glorify Him as God, and to obey the law which He has written upon their hearts, they are inexcusable. Nevertheless, God will not cease to call them to repentance, and it may be that special help is reserved for the end of life in the case of those who have laboured under special disadvantages during the course of their life. But if knowing God they seek to do His will, they are walking in the way that leads to God. "For God is not a respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted by Him." There is no denying that there are multitudes of people in a state of the most deplorable spiritual need. But is this the direct consequence of wilful sin, as in the case of the city of Jerusalem, over which our Saviour wept, saying, "If thou hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace. But now they are hidden from thine eyes?" If so, being responsible for the cause, they must be responsible for the effects that follow from it. But if it is not their fault, but their misfortune, we are certain that they will not be condemned for the want of opportunities for which they were not themselves responsible. These things, however, are hidden from us, more especially what passes between the soul and God at the very last hour,

so that we cannot affirm that any one has ever passed out of this world without having had the opportunity, either during life or at the close of it, of making a deliberate choice between good and evil, between life and death. This being so, we have no sufficient ground for the opinion that there will be for any one a second probation after death, unless some testimony of Scripture can be brought forward to warrant our holding it. The Rev. E. White brings certain passages from Scripture, which he interprets in favour of this doctrine, relying principally on that which occurs in the Epistle of St. Peter, who speaks of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison that were disobedient in the days of Noah.* It must be admitted that one text is sufficient evidence of the truth of any doctrine provided it be quite certain that the meaning of the text is rightly understood. Whether that can be said to be true in the present case we shall consider a little later when we come to the testimony of Scripture.

3. The third opinion *denies that salvation is possible for any one after death*, the probation of

* It is important to observe that the advocate of the theory in question cannot adduce the instance of the sinners who perished in the Flood as a case in point. They are declared not only to have been disobedient, but to have, by their disobedience, wearied out the long-suffering patience of God. The time of the preaching of Noah, and of the building of the ark, it is supposed, was 120 years.

all men being, according to the teaching of God's Word, limited to this life. Does the Scripture expressly say so? The Bible is not a manual of catechetical instruction. Doctrines of primary importance, such as that of the blessed Trinity, are not always taught therein by direct statement. The doctrine we are at present concerned with is not expressed therein *totidem verbis*, but the question is whether it is not really taught there.

A few remarks may be permitted in connection with what has been said concerning the teaching of the Old Testament on this subject. It has been stated that its language is on this point ambiguous and obscure. Taken simply by itself the language of the Old Testament may, on many points, be said to be obscure. But then it was never intended to stand thus alone. It was read in the light of an authoritative traditional interpretation which had come down from the times of the prophets. Professor Abrahams, in his paper on the Inspiration of Scripture, told us that this traditional explanation was regarded by the Rabbinical School as itself inspired. At all events, it was held by the Pharisees to be authoritative, and they were the recognised teachers of the people. The Sadducees rejected all traditions, and, following their own judgment alone in the interpretation of such parts of Scripture as

the Book of Ecclesiastes, chap. iii., were led into grievous error, denying the resurrection of the body and the existence of spirits. St. Paul, who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, in superabundant zeal for the traditions of the Elders, after his conversion, on a memorable occasion, declared himself in this respect a Pharisee. And our blessed Lord, whilst He rebuked the Pharisees for bringing in usages and traditions of men in derogation of the Law, did not condemn their mode of interpreting the Law. On the contrary, He said to His disciples and the people, "The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in the chair of Moses. All things whatsoever they shall say to you observe and do, but according to their works do ye not." We may conclude, then, that the language of the Old Testament, as explained to the Jews by the aid of the traditions of the Elders, was not ambiguous and enigmatical, and that its teaching was not in conflict with that of our Divine Lord, inasmuch as the Pharisees, ever ready to attack His doctrine, did not dare to affirm that it stood condemned by its opposition to the received interpretation of their sacred writings.

We turn now to the New Testament to learn what is the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles on the important question before us.

1. It tells us that *the time of our probation is*

limited to this present life. Our blessed Lord says, "The night cometh when no man can work." The night of which He speaks is death. When death comes man can no longer work. How then can he undertake and accomplish the most difficult and important of all works, viz., that of repentance and salvation? St. Paul urges the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain, for now is the accepted time, now the day of salvation. And in his Epistle to the Hebrews he warns them not to let the present opportunity of salvation slip by, for repentance afterwards will come too late. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see God. Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest there be any fornicator or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For you know how that afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, although he sought it with tears." And as the time of probation for each individual ends at death, so for all mankind it terminates at the Day of Judgment. There will be no more time in which any man will be able to do anything to make his lot other than it is. "I saw a mighty angel come down from heaven, and he set his right foot upon the sea and his left foot upon the earth, and he

lifted up his hand to heaven, and he swore by Him that liveth for ever and ever that time should be no longer."

2. It tells us that *for mortal sin there is no forgiveness after this life*. The Apostle gives a black list of such sins: "Of the which I tell you now, as I have told you before, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." He does not mean that, if they repent now, they may not obtain God's kingdom. It is to move them to repentance that he addresses to them these words of warning. But he does mean that they cannot put off repentance to the next life, and then obtain admittance into God's kingdom. If that had been possible, he would not have said absolutely that they who do such things shall not enter the kingdom of God, he would have said rather that they shall not enter before they repent. Elsewhere the same Apostle uses the same unqualified terms in speaking of the judgment which awaits such sinners, "Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you weeping, that they are enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is destruction." But this truth is declared more explicitly in these words of our Lord: "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven. And whosoever shall speak a word

against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come." Our blessed Lord calls Himself, in His humility, the Son of Man. Whenever we commit any sin we refuse obedience to His Law, we say we will not have this man to reign over us. But He is full of mercy. If we repent of our iniquity He will forgive us. There is no sin for which pardon may not, in this life, be obtained (1 John ii.). God calls upon the sinner to repent. If the sinner refuses to listen to the call, he sins against the Son of Man and he also resists the Holy Ghost. For a time the Holy Spirit strives against the sinner, but he will not strive against him for ever, and therefore the admonition is given, "Quench not the Spirit." If the sinner continues in this obstinacy to the end he consummates the sin against the Holy Ghost, which will not be forgiven, our blessed Lord declares, either in this world or in the next. This was the sin of which the Jews were guilty, to whom our Lord spoke these words. And seeing into the future, wherein they would consummate this their sin, He said to them (John viii. 21), "You shall die in your sins." Whatever sin, then, any man commits, he sins against the Son of Man, and, if only he will repent, he will obtain forgive-

ness. But if he will not repent of it, if he continues in it until death, "he shall never be forgiven, but shall be guilty of everlasting sin."

3. It tells us *that the punishment of unforgiven sin is eternal*. This is a very awful doctrine. It would bring immense relief to us to be told upon authority that this doctrine formed no part of the Christian faith. But it is enunciated in so many different ways, repeated on so many different occasions, stated in such express terms, that there would seem to be no doctrine of the Christian religion more clearly taught in sacred Scripture. It is to no purpose to allege that the ordinances of the Jewish Covenant were declared to be a law for ever, although they are no longer in force now. They were intended to bind for ever the professors of the Jewish religion. They were not intended to bind those who were not Jews, nor to bind after the preaching of the Gospel had brought the Jewish religion to its divinely-appointed end. But the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom which will never have an end. And the words of Christ are words which in the effects they produce will never pass away. And what are the words which He will speak to the wicked, and which will not fail to be accomplished in them? "Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." Neither is it left open for any one

to say that the language here used is evidently figurative, or that it is said that the fire will be everlasting, not that the wicked will suffer for ever, since it is added immediately after, these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life eternal. It is very proper to examine critically into the exact meaning of the words that are used in Scripture ; but let it be borne in mind to whom they were spoken. The discourses of our blessed Lord were addressed to His disciples and to the people. If, then, it be admitted, as it must be, that His hearers could not but have understood Him to mean that the punishment of the wicked will be eternal, we are certain that our blessed Lord used those words in that sense. As regards Catholics, there can be no questioning the truth of this doctrine. The Church in the fifth General Council condemned the error of Origen in denying the eternity of the punishments of the next life. In the fourth Lateran Council she defined this article of the faith, and imposes upon her sacred ministers the obligation of reciting the Athanasian Creed, which explicitly declares it.

The third opinion, which maintains that salvation is not possible after death, will have been proved true if it has been shown that sacred Scripture teaches that the time of our probation is

limited to this life, that there is no forgiveness of mortal sin in the next world, and that its punishment is eternal. There is one objection urged against this third opinion, founded upon the sacred Scripture, which remains to be considered.

The passage in the Epistle of St. Peter which speaks of Christ's preaching to the spirits in prison, is adduced as testifying to the possibility of some of those who have died in sin being saved after death. Dr. MacEwan, in his very able paper, has observed that this passage has received a variety of interpretations, that, if it be understood to signify that Christ preached repentance to lost souls, it stands alone and without a parallel in Scripture, and leaves us at a loss to comprehend why the preaching in this case should be exclusively to those who had died in the days of Noah. He then suggests an interpretation which would harmonise in its teaching this passage with the other parts of Scripture. The following interpretation of this passage, which is substantially that of St. Augustine (Ep. 164), who is followed by Venerable Bede and St. Thomas Aquinas, seems to me to be preferable. St. Augustine understands the preaching here spoken of to be that of Noah when he was building the ark. As St. John was sent before our Lord when he came to sanctify the world by the

regenerating waters of baptism, as Enoch and Elias will appear on the earth before the great day of the Lord, when He will come to destroy the world by fire, so Noah was sent before He came to destroy the world by the waters of the Deluge. Noah is called by St. Peter a preacher of righteousness. By the spirits in prison St. Augustine understands the captive souls of men who were held fast bound by the chains of iniquity.* It will be said that the words of St. Peter are, Christ suffered for us, being put to death in the flesh, and quickened by the Spirit, by which He went and preached. That is to say, Christ died and was raised again to life after His entombment by (or in) His Divine spirit. His soul and body were separated by death. His Divinity, which was never separated from either one or the other, reunited them together. In this same Divine spirit He went in the days of Noah, and preached through him repentance to the ungodly. They neglected the warning given, and perished by the Flood, although it may be hoped that many repented at last. But is it not strange

* As St. Augustine understands by "the spirits in prison," those who were bound by the fetters of sin, so in the following chapter of St. Peter's Epistle, where it is said that "the Gospel was preached to the dead," he understands by the dead those who are spiritually dead, in which sense the word is used by St. Peter, ii. 24, and elsewhere.

to represent Christ as going to the wicked and preaching by the mouth of Noah? Was He then alive? Our Divine Lord said to the Jews, "Before Abraham was I am," and so too before Noah was. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." He is the same Person in His Divine nature before the mystery of the Incarnation, and in His divine and human nature after the accomplishment of that mystery. God spoke by the prophets and the Divine Spirit of Jesus, *i.e.*, God spoke by the mouth of Noah, who was a prophet sent to foretell the coming destruction of the world. St. Paul, in like manner, says to the Ephesians (ii. 17), "Christ came"—that is, through the ministry of the Apostle—"and preached peace to you who were afar off." Christ, it is said, was slain from the beginning of the world, inasmuch as the sacrifices of old were figures of the sacrifice to come, and as such were pleasing to God. Christ was the meritorious cause of all the saving grace at any time given to men. The rock from which the waters came forth in the desert was Christ in figure, because from Him flow abundantly the living waters of grace for the refreshment and invigoration of His people in their passage through the desert of this world to the promised land.

If this be the true interpretation of the passage

in question, there is no reference here to the descent of the soul of Christ into that part of hell which is called Limbo, and no warrant given for the expectation that the opportunity of repentance and of salvation will be vouchsafed to any hereafter who have died in sin.

ARTICLE IX.

REV. RICHARD F. LITTLEDALE, LL.D.

THE fact that the general bent of Christian thought for many centuries has been opposed to the admission of any place for repentance and salvation after death is remarkably illustrated, not merely by that consensus of the Protestant confessions upon it, mentioned as a factor in the inquiry by one of the contributors to the present discussion, but by the very details of that discussion itself, seeing that only two of the writers, so far, have defended the affirmative position directly, and those two are precisely those who represent non-Christian denominations; while a third, who has given a qualified and carefully limited support to it, is known as the chief living advocate of a theory of the nature of the life to come which, though propounded before him by Dodwell, Hallett, and a few other speculative thinkers, has never made part of Christian consciousness as a whole. This at any rate suggests, if it comes short of establishing, that the more

lenient view cannot be upheld by those who frankly accept historical Christianity as embodying Divine truth.

Nevertheless, I am constrained to range myself on the side of Rabbi Singer and Mr. Page Hopps on a survey of the entire question, though accepting only some of their arguments. These are R. Singer's pleas that the ethical character of penalties requires them to be either deterrent or reformative, but that final doom at death is neither, and so is irreconcilable with the moral attributes of God; that the sterner view frustrates God's purpose in creating man, while, if it be true, we are entitled to know the stage of sin when it becomes unpardonable; and that it is incredible that repentance should be the single power that the soul can no longer exercise after death; also Mr. Page Hopps's pleas that justice requires a chance in the next world for those who have had none here; and that the doctrine of the Divine Fatherhood, in connection with that of God's almightiness, is inconsistent with His forsaking His children for ever, rather than continuing to love and save them. I do not propose to embody these arguments, or to reproduce them in altered form, as part of my own contribution to this debate, but merely to raise some omitted issues.

It may be well to remark, at the outset, that there are two considerable deductions to be made by strict inquirers from the apparent unanimity of consent to the sterner view on the part of collective Christendom. First, no dogmatic decree of the universal Church can be produced in support of that view, nor is it embodied in any of the Creeds. Next, it has always, from the time of St. Gregory Nyssen, been a tolerated opinion in the Eastern Church that it is possible, however rare, for a soul in the spirit-world to pass from the ranks of the lost to those of the saved. And it may be fairly enough added that none of the Protestant Confessions cited has held its ground firmly amongst the descendants of those who framed them. They are, for the most part, drafted on either the lines of the Confession of Augsburg or on those of Calvin's Institutes—the Westminster Confession, in particular, being little but a condensation of the latter—and it is no exaggeration to say that they have ceased to command serious acceptance amongst the societies whose standards they nominally continue to be. Whatever be the reason of this change in their position, the change itself is valid against their being appealed to as helping to decide the question under consideration. And the consensus, in any case, is no stronger than that in favour of the

mechanical theory of Inspiration, which has now been abandoned everywhere.

While it is true that the question of Universalism does not properly enter into this discussion, as being excluded by the limitations of the thesis, yet it is impossible to keep the ideas apart in the mind, even when they are not commingled in the language of the disputants; and it is thus necessary to say that the statement made above, to the effect that there is no decision of the whole Christian Church adverse to the notion of salvability after death, may be extended in point of fact to there being no such decision against even Universalism, for the currently repeated assertion that such a condemnation was decreed directly or indirectly by the Fifth General Council is unsupported by the original documents, though it is certain that it was precisely this condemnation which the Emperor Justinian desired to elicit, so that a more than common significance attaches to the refusal of the Council to pronounce on the question. As the greater includes the less, the belief that some persons may be saved after death is granted tenure by the toleration thus extended to the belief that all will be saved.

It is impossible to exaggerate the awful solemnity of the language of the New Testament on the sub-

jects of sin, death, and judgment to come, nor does any of the contributors to this discussion seem to me to have in the smallest degree over-stated the case on this side. But I think they are fairly chargeable with having failed to take account of another body of Scripture doctrine, suggesting the "restitution of all things," and the disappearance of evil from the universe, expressed in language no less clear and definite, but as fraught with the tones of joy and hope as the other is with those of terror and despair. Such are, for instance: "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John iii. 17); "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift of grace, which is by one Man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many" (Rom. v. 15); "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John x. 10); and many like. Now, while it may be true, in a sense, as Bishop Weathers points out, that God made man for His own glory, rather than for man's happiness, yet it is not less true that God sent His Son to save the world, that this was the aim and end of the Incarnation and mission. But as it is certain that the great majority of mankind live and

die in sin, we are driven, on the hypothesis of the popular theology, to the conclusion that Christ's mission failed of its purpose, that He was unable to save the world, and could rescue only an infinitesimal minority of its inhabitants. That, on any earthly analogy we can frame, would mean crushing defeat in the contest upon which He entered ; and cannot be evaded by any such process as dwelling on the superior worth of the ransomed fraction when compared with the quality of the vastly preponderating masses of the lost, seeing that it was precisely to save sinners that He came. Some mode of reconciling the antithesis must accordingly be found, and the simplest and most reasonable one is to postulate salvability after death. The hypothesis, advanced by two of those who share in this discussion, that salvation may be granted *at* death, though not after it, does not solve the problem for those who define salvation as deliverance from sin itself, even more than from the penalties of sin. For it must be contended, on that theory, either that the penalty of bodily death is in itself so severe as to be a payment in full for all offences whatsoever—which reaches Universalism by a new road—or else that a moral change at the moment of death is so common an experience as to warrant us in basing this great induction upon it. But death-

bed repentances, though happily abundant enough to form matter of thanksgiving, are necessarily rare, from the familiar fact that decay of mental power usually accompanies that of bodily strength, so that in the majority of deathbeds the patients are incapable of connected thought for some time before actual dissolution. Moreover, there is a singular omission running through all the papers on the severer side, namely, reference to that article of the Creed which affirms the final judgment of the quick *and the dead*. If there be no salvability after death, if death be in fact the bringing up the prisoner for judgment, there is no reason why any save those alive on earth at the Second Advent should be judged at the Last Day, since each former human being would have been separately tried and sentenced at the time of his bodily death. There would be no motive, so to speak, in summoning the saint from his place in Paradise or heaven, the sinner from his place in Gehenna, merely to go through the form of being remitted thither again. This postponement of the judgment of the departed must have some motive, and, I venture to think, one more in accordance with moral law than such a pageant would be. Such a motive would be the utilising the intermediate time between death and judgment for the gradual fitting of souls to enter

on a higher life, by some process of purifying and educating, against which it is quite conceivable, of course, that certain souls might harden themselves permanently and implacably. Yet there does not seem adequate warrant for the theory advanced by two writers in this discussion, that the cumulative nature of sin makes it probable that death, so far from ending sin, will actually increase the appetite for it, that the impulse in the direction of evil will receive new force and intensity the moment the checks of bodily existence are withdrawn, and that this consideration practically does away with the hope of amendment in the spirit-world. Against this may be justly set the one revelation vouchsafed us on that head—the mysterious and awful parable of the rich man and Lazarus. What then is the attitude of the rich man in his place of torment? On the hypothesis just stated, he should be depicted as blaspheming and rebelling, as loading Abraham and, still more, Lazarus with curses, as filled with the spirit of hatred. On the contrary, his address to Abraham is respectful and submissive; his first thought, when his petition for the mitigation of his own sufferings is rejected, is how he may save his brothers from like sufferings. If we may venture to say so, he has actually attained a higher spiritual level than he had reached on

earth, the punishment he undergoes has been corrective, and not merely vindictive. In that case, though neither he nor Abraham could of their own powers cross the gulf between them, what difficulty is there in holding that Christ's right hand may stretch across it, and set the penitent and purified sinner on the safer side ?

There is one theological concept which has been repeated by nearly all the writers in this Symposium, which is indeed a religious commonplace of the widest acceptance, and which affects powerfully the decision of the question at issue. It is the tenet that this life is a time of "probation." Now it is important to observe that no statement to that effect occurs anywhere in Scripture, though I admit that ideas are found sufficiently cognate to account for the rise and spread of the opinion. To my own mind, it suggests an untenable analogy, and one out of keeping with full recognition of Divine wisdom. For what it in fact implies is that God does not know how we will turn out, and has to watch our conduct in this world before being able to come to a decision as to our final destiny. A careful analysis of those passages of Scripture where the word "prove" or any equivalent term occurs, will not bear out such a view. God proves men or tries them, not to discover whether they

have any good in them, but to develop what is good, and to remove what is evil; so that the most frequent context in which the idea is found is that of smelting ore or assaying bullion (Job xxiii. 10; Psalm lxvi. 10; Zechariah xiii. 9, &c.); and as there is some possibility of good in the worst sinner, as possibilities of evil in the highest saint, the reasonable inference is that God will no more allow the good to be overpowered and destroyed by the evil than a skilful worker in metals would throw away the gold which he finds mingled with some base alloy.

If for the word "probation" we substitute that of "education," we shall obtain, I believe, a truer view of our position in this world. We know from experience what an important period of our lives our schooltime is; how hard it is to make up in after-life for opportunities wasted then; how all our prospects may be conditioned by the use we made of those years when the brain was still flexible, when the limbs were still pliant; how after a certain age there are arts which the hand cannot be taught to practise, studies which the brain cannot any longer assimilate. Yet all is not lost even so. It is a common experience to see men who failed at school recover themselves in adult life, and often develop noble qualities and

capacities which were not merely dormant, but unsuspected; while the proportion of those who have learnt nothing but evil in their schooldays, and have used their adult faculties only to plunge ever deeper into wickedness, though a sorrowful residuum, is also a small one. And there are different kinds, as well as different grades, of schools known to us; we have the reformatory as well as the university, the former of which does good work, even if a certain percentage of the pupils proves irreclaimable. Holding that death is only an episode in the course of life, that we have, in fact, only one life given to us, to be lived, it is true, under conditions perhaps more widely unlike than those of the foetus, the infant, and the adult, but still the same vital principle, I am unable to see why death should suddenly arrest that power of spiritual improvement which we do not deny to the convicts of our gaols, why a disembodied soul should be capable of falling deeper into sin, but not be equally capable of striving upwards towards righteousness. Of course, pursuing the analogy sketched above, there is great peril in neglecting our schooltime in this world, in abusing our opportunities, in presenting ourselves not merely unprepared, but actively unfitted, to enter on a new and higher stage of existence. How great the

danger we run in so doing we have no means of adequately estimating; but it must at the least be serious enough to exact the most watchful and prayerful care against yielding to the temptation of neglect, whose penalty may be so tremendous. But three passages of Scripture seem to point so clearly to the conclusion that there is a condition of the sinner in the next world which is not final, that, taken together, they all but force on us the idea of educational correction already adverted to. They are the two sayings of our Lord, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing;" and "The servant that knew not his master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with few stripes;" with the famous passage in 1 Peter iii. 19, 20; which has been quoted by more than one of the writers preceding. As regards the first of these, Olshausen has some deservedly severe remarks on the evasion of its plain meaning by those who allege that it denotes endless imprisonment, because the last farthing cannot possibly be paid, such a gloss being contrary to the literal scope of the words. As regards the second, it is relevant to point out that the adjective conditioning "stripes" is not "light," but "few;" and stripes continued through all eternity, however light, must

be numerically infinite. And in respect of the third, I agree with the contributor who has dwelt on the noteworthy simplicity and clearness of thought and diction which mark First Peter, and oblige us to take the plain literal sense of the words, instead of accepting the forced and obscure interpretation of St. Augustine, whose influence, following upon that exerted earlier in the same direction by another African theologian, Tertullian, has had much to do, with the prevalence of the harsher view in Western Christendom, as distinguished from the milder theology of the Oriental Churches; with which St. Augustine has never been a power. It is not to be forgotten, moreover, that it is St. Augustine to whom is due the promulgation of the most horrible tenet which ever slandered a God of love and justice, the damnation of all unbaptized infants. His testimony on the present question is put out of court by that one fact, and we need not concern ourselves with him hereon, much as he can teach us wisely and brilliantly on many other topics of religion. And yet even St. Augustine was not prepared to condemn the milder view altogether, a noteworthy fact in so vehement a controversialist.

It has been quite justly pointed out that the tremendous price paid to redeem the world from

sin is the strongest proof to a Christian of the awful and deadly nature of sin, the impossibility of explaining it away, on any pantheistic theory, as a lower form of good, or as a necessary stimulant to good ; but the deduction from this premiss, that sin, if not repented of at some time previous to death, makes the case of the sinner for ever hopeless, rather suggests that the price was insufficient for the intended ransom, than enables us to realise the notion that the sins of an exceptionally depraved life will certainly be forgiven if repented of the instant before death, but that the comparatively trivial faults of a life which has been careless rather than criminal, if not consciously repented of within the same limit of time, will find no pardon through all eternity. I am not categorically denying the possible truth of this view, to which the parable of the Ten Virgins lends support, but merely pointing out that the argument mentioned above in no wise helps us to realise it. There is yet another Scriptural factor which has to be taken into account in estimating the evidence as a whole. That is the mention of a first and a second resurrection, to the former of which special privileges are annexed. It would appear that all who share in the first resurrection are promoted at once to what may be called the peerage of heaven, and

receive the titles of kings and priests (Rev. v. 10 ; xx. 5, 6), but it is not implied that those who have to await the second resurrection are all in the ranks of the lost ; only that they cannot attain the dignity of the glorified saints of the first resurrection. Kings, as a term, connotes subjects, and the common patristic interpretation of the phrase in the present connection, that it means no more than thorough mastery over their own lower natures (exactly as the Stoics said before the Fathers began to write), does not satisfy the intellect. It is easier to suppose them entrusted with some authority (possibly disciplinary and educational) over the lower ranks of the redeemed, and then we are thrown back on the inquiry as to the sources whence these lower ranks are recruited. Those who have either fought a good fight here, or have accepted the Divine offer of pardon in the present life, are, it would seem, partakers of the first resurrection ; and that would seem to suggest that the commonalty of the redeemed, if I may so phrase it, will be made up of those who have from one cause or another not come under the amnesty here, but have made their submission later. It would be unjustifiable to dogmatise on so obscure and abstruse a matter, but speculation upon it may be pardoned. A very pregnant remark I once met,

but whose source I have forgotten, is that our Lord Himself divides the two classes which will stand before His judgment-seat into sheep and goats; but goats, however inferior in value to sheep, are at any rate next to them in an Eastern shepherd's estimate of his wealth. It is not as if we found mention of sheep and wolves.

The chief objection which many earnest and devout minds entertain against the belief that pardon is possible in the world to come is that such a belief, if widely accepted, would do infinite moral mischief, by encouraging multitudes to sin boldly, who are now deterred by the fear of hell. My own conviction is altogether opposed to this; for I am convinced that a vast quantity of sin is the practical outcome of the popular view. And that because its very stringency promotes either disbelief, reckless despair, or unwarranted self-confidence. Nothing is commoner amongst some of the emotional sects than a coarse Antinomianism which sees no incompatibility between high religious profession and gross immorality, because the members of such communions have persuaded themselves that the threats and warnings of Scripture do not apply to them, but only to persons of another type of doctrinal opinion. Again, a different class of persons, closely allied to the sentimental humanitarians

of social politics, practically leave God's attribute of justice entirely out of consideration, and, not unreasonably revolting from the popular theology, carry their revolt to the extreme of denying future punishment altogether, as too shocking an idea to be entertained at all. Yet a third class sinks into despair, and plunges all the deeper into sin, because seeing no gleam of hope beyond the grave; while, perhaps, the largest group of all consists of those who trust, so to speak, to the chapter of accidents for their salvation, and, unable to believe that their own sins are heinous enough to merit everlasting punishment, rest content with putting the whole subject away from their minds as unpractical for themselves, whatever may be the case of notoriously grave offenders, and make no effort to attain personal holiness. Similarly, when the penal code of this country was a very sanguinary one, and multitudes of petty offences were capital crimes, the law was far less deterrent than in its present much milder form. Robbery was much more frequently attended by murder than it is now, simply because the robber, having already forfeited his life by commission of the minor offence, found it his interest to remove the witness who could bring him to the gallows; while petty larcenies, such as pocket-picking, actually throve in the teeth of the capital

penalty, because its very disproportion to the offence made its execution highly uncertain, seeing that judges sometimes, and juries often, defeated technical justice by deciding against the evidence, rather than commit the graver injustice of taking human life as the forfeit of some trifling theft, which would now-a-days be visited with a few months' imprisonment. Precisely as the criminal classes before Romilly's reforms thought that they might safely take their chance of this reluctance to enforce so cruel a law, so multitudes of sinners think about God. They cannot believe that His mercy, nay, His justice, will admit of His inflicting the awful penalty of everlasting damnation for what are, in their eyes, comparatively trivial offences, and as their creed tells them of no other penalty, they easily arrive at the conclusion that they need apprehend no penalty at all, but may continue in sin, provided it does not assume a very heinous form. If they once grasped the truths that "what a man soweth, that shall he reap," and that "the wages of sin is death," they would be less presumptuous. The certainty that every unrepented and unamended sin must bear its penalty, exactly and justly proportioned to each offence, but not passing into the vindictive and irrevocable stage unless and until corrective punishment has been

obstinately resisted, would be much more of a deterrent than the popular theology has proved hitherto, or can be expected to prove in time to come, given the workings of the average human mind. Nor is there any incompatibility between such a view and full belief in God's offer of pardon through Christ; for when David repented and confessed after his great double sin of adultery and murder, the penalty followed the pardon. "The Lord hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die. Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Samuel xii. 13, 14). God's mercy is shown more in delivering us from sin itself than from the mere penalties of sin, and it may well be that the road to such deliverance must be, for many souls, through corrective suffering. And this seems to remove the objection raised by one of the contributors that God's attribute of justice cannot be invoked in support of the milder view, since to suppose Him in any way bound to pardon would do away with the operation of grace. It might be enough to point out that very orthodox theologians have not hesitated to say that God has bound Himself to pardon those who ask for that pardon in His Son's name, and has thus, if one may

dare to use the phrase, limited His own freedom of action thereby. But it is better to say that we cannot split up our notion of God, so as to think of Him as consisting of a number of separable attributes, acting apart from and independently of one another. In perfect and absolute Being there must be such harmonious interaction of all faculties and attributes that they operate constantly as an undivided whole. And thus God's grace is inseparable from God's justice. He must do justice, it is a necessity of His being, but that justice is itself grace and mercy; the very punishment of the sinner is a manifestation of Divine love. And so Dante, saying even more than he intended—for he may probably enough have designed no more than to indicate the Persons of the Trinity by a paraphrastic allusion—adorns the inscription on the gate of hell with the words:—

*“ Fecime la divina potestate,
La somma sapienza e'l primo amore.”*

Power Divine it was that fashioned me,
Supremest Wisdom and primeval Love.

The slowness with which the milder view has made its way cannot, I think, be urged as conclusive against its tenability, when we consider how long it was before even the Apostles themselves, with all their exceptional means of illumi-

nation, were able to grasp the notion of admitting Gentiles to the Christian Church without having first passed through the stage of Jewish proselytism. The delay is fixed by modern chronologists at from ten to eleven years after the Ascension, and it is plain that resistance to the innovation continued amongst a powerful section of the Jewish Christians down to the destruction of the Temple, and the consequent collapse of the Levitical system. Yet the case seems so plain to us, as having been part of the Gospel plan from the very beginning, that we find a difficulty in understanding the grounds of that resistance, till a more careful inquiry reveals that the line of argument adopted by the Judaizers must have been closely akin to that now employed by the opponents of the "larger hope;" for the main factor in each case must be the same, exclusive reference to one part only of Scripture evidence, leaving the other out of the reckoning. It is plain that the Judaizers had it in their power to cite numerous passages from the Prophets, plainly implying the permanence of the Mosaic code, the continued supremacy of Jerusalem, and the submission of the Gentiles, as inferiors, perhaps even as subjects or vassals, to a Hebrew rule, and that such ideas as the abolition of the Levitical code and the admission of Gentile equality with the chosen

people would offend, not their national feelings alone, but their deepest religious convictions, as setting aside Divine revelation of the clearest nature. I believe the validity of the argument adduced in the course of this discussion to support the milder view—that it is one out of many results of a stronger and warmer sense of justice and mercy prevalent amongst thinkers in all civilised countries than was to be found until a very short time back. I may illustrate this by referring to the manner in which one of my precursors has spoken of the sorrow which the thought of eternal suffering must bring into heaven itself, how intolerable its joys would be to those who knew their nearest and dearest to be enduring unending and intolerable agonies. The objection is not a powerful one argumentatively, for there is no difficulty in supposing all memory of the sort to be swept clean out of their minds; but the point I desire to labour is the marked advance in compassionateness which such a sentiment exhibits, when compared with the view current in mediæval times, and down at any rate till the last century, that one factor in the bliss of the redeemed will actually be the sight of the tortures of the lost in hell, which they will be enabled to behold, as at once adding the flavour of contrast to their own happiness, and providing be-

sides an interesting spectacle, akin to the gladiatorial shows of ancient Rome or the bull-fights of modern Spain. The moral interval between the two points of view is enormous, and few will incline to prefer the earlier, which is less inappropriate in the Koran, where it seems implied at the end of Sura lxxxiii. And yet the earlier is not an illogical deduction from the premiss of the limitation of pardon to this life, because the delight of the redeemed in heaven at the sufferings of hell may be plausibly explained as glad acquiescence in Divine justice, and thankfulness for the final coercion of evil into powerlessness. But our instinctive shrinking from it, however glossed, certainly creates a presumption hostile to the theology upon which it is based, especially as that theology, in its specific Calvinistic form, has suddenly collapsed all over Christendom within living memory, as a consequence of quickened moral insight. But no such a revolution could take place without some large price being paid for it, and though the fall of Calvinism has cut off one of the chief sources of unbelief, yet it has been accompanied by an enfeeblement, in many quarters, of the sense of sin as being in necessary antagonism to the Divine nature, and as entailing suffering inevitably upon those who yield themselves to its power. Of this

enfeeblement the wide spread of Universalism in a very crude form is a symptom, and the advocates of the sterner view are, I believe, fully justified in apprehending moral danger from this direction, so soon as the opinions in question shall have percolated to a stratum consisting of persons unaccustomed to balanced reasoning, and only too ready to seize upon any means of escaping responsibility for their acts. They can be corrected only by a theology which will take full account of both the currents of eschatological teaching in the New Testament, and will enforce at once the certainty of future punishment for sin and the other certainty that such punishment is moderated by Divine love and mercy in full accord with Divine justice; but that this justice must needs take full account of the knowledge and the circumstances of the sinner, so that the peril to those who consciously put themselves in antagonism to the Divine will can scarcely be too forcibly stated. "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men."

ARTICLE X.

REV. G. W. OLVER, B.A.

THE word "salvation" is used in Holy Scripture sometimes with a wider, sometimes with a narrower meaning. Two examples taken from the opening verses of St. Peter's First Epistle may serve as illustrations. In the fifth verse we read of "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time;" in the ninth verse he says, "ye rejoice, receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." St. Paul also bids the Philippians "work out your own salvation." All this is plain when we remember that to save is to make safe, to keep safe, and to establish in confirmed safety. That the Saviour is also the Healer, saving His people from their sins, may help us to understand the nature of the gift, but does not affect the time of the giving. All who have been made partakers of the firstfruits may lawfully look to be enriched with the fulness of the blessing. These, therefore, are even now the saved ones, who shall also be saved unto the uttermost, seeing that to them Christ "shall appear the second time without

sin unto salvation." This being so, it is evident that the work of salvation cannot be completed until after death, "until the day of Jesus Christ." It is equally evident that the gift of salvation and the pledge of its eventual completion are among the blessings which may be obtained in this life. And because it is true of every human being that he is or is not now a partaker of this gift, having a claim through promise to the reversion; so all men are at this moment either saved or unsaved. From the one of these classes to the other, men may pass in this present world; but can any so pass in the after world? Can a soul that is spiritually dead be made a partaker of spiritual life after the bodily life has ceased?

The question is not one which concerns man's relation to the material world, or to his fellow-men. Nor is it one which can be determined by an examination of mental processes or of the moral constitution. The answer depends upon man's relation to God and the unseen world.

To this answer, whatever it may be, personal experience cannot guide us. The facts which we seek to know, are those of a world into which we have not yet entered. Testimony is our only resource. But human testimony can have no place; for the facts are those of a world from which no man

can return. Divine testimony alone can avail, and this is "Divine revelation." The only authorised testimony which the Almighty has given concerning life and immortality, is that which the Bible contains; and this alone can direct us.

To this conclusion Mr. Page Hopps demurs. He says that "the Bible itself, even though it spoke fully and plainly on this subject, could not close inquiry with regard to it." He claims the right to supplement and correct it, by appeal to other supposed sources of information. He would justify this claim, in part, upon the ground that "Divine revelation" is not "confined to the pages of the Bible." Whether it is so confined or not, must depend upon the meaning given to the word "revelation." No one will deny that God speaks in many ways and by many men. It is not the less true that the only authorised statement concerning man's moral and spiritual relation to his Creator is that contained in Holy Scripture. No additions or corrections supplied from other sources, can be accepted as of equal authority, until they have been equally accredited.

Possibly Mr. Hopps may attach a different meaning to his own words. We allow that He who has spoken to us in the Bible also speaks to us in Nature. We have His words and His works. Two

questions arise in either case, "What are His words? His works?" and "What do they mean?" With the answers to these questions, material science, mental and moral science, and theological science are all and equally busy. Each has its special work, and as to the first of the two questions, observation, reflection, and criticism independently pursue their way. But when we arrive at the second question, then in every department the task is one of exegesis. Thenceforth independence ceases. For the purpose of any particular inquiry, every philosopher may act as though there were no other science than his own; but when he attempts to gather up results and to formulate truth, he can no longer afford to forget that in all truth there is harmony. He must test his conclusions by comparison with those of other philosophers. This is binding upon all, in matter and mind, in morals and in theology. The interpretations of one class of inquirers may and must be harmonised with the facts presented by others; but no one of them can claim the right to introduce unobserved facts into the domain of another.

If then Mr. Hopps simply appeals to what he deems a fair interpretation of the works as against some proposed theological interpretation of the words, his appeal must be heard. He would fall

back upon "the great abiding facts of Nature and human nature," and "the infinite perfections of our Creator."

What these "great abiding facts of Nature" are, Mr. Hopps does not tell us. In truth, they do not exist unless it be in the theorist's imagination. We know nothing of "Nature" except from its phenomena, and these are by no means "abiding." They are never at one stay, changing every hour they are. Even where there is order, there is incessant variation. If Mr. Hopps is thinking of what are termed the "laws" of Nature, then these are not "facts," even when they are correctly as well as soberly deduced from observed phenomena. Granted that in given circumstances a certain result will follow from the operation of a fixed law; it is not therefore certain that the law will operate to-morrow, for the circumstances may not be forthcoming. No "facts of Nature," however the expression may be interpreted, can inform us concerning man's spiritual relation to God, or the laws of spiritual life in the world to come, when all the things which now are shall have been dissolved.

If we turn to what Mr. Hopps calls the "great abiding facts of human nature," we meet with no more satisfaction. What they are, human experience has utterly failed to discover: witness the

endless diversities and contradictions of mental and moral philosophers. Mr. Hopps himself affirms that "man is a naturally progressive being ;" and the affirmation, as he introduces it, means nothing unless it means that all men so long as they are in this world are "naturally progressive." His words are, "If salvation is not possible after death, something will be done to change the nature of man, to make of a naturally progressive being an unprogressive one." But this assumption of natural progress, so far from representing an "abiding fact," is utterly untrue, and is contradicted by the history of every day's life. Even by those who most hopefully anticipate the continuous improvement of the race, the deterioration of the individual cannot be denied.

Yet there is a truth hidden amid the confusion of the utterance, but it is a truth which the Bible alone clearly teaches. Human nature with its material body and its reasonable soul is not complete except as it is in living union with its Creator. Take man as a moral agent dwelling in the midst of things material, yet ever governed and guided by the Divine Spirit, and he is naturally progressive. Let him reject the Divine guidance, and he is retrogressive everywhere. Doubtless human nature has its abiding facts, but they cannot

be discovered apart from the testimony of the Creator.

So again, Mr. Hopps appeals to "the infinite perfections of our Creator." He especially dwells upon His justice. So far from dreading the appeal, I would go even a step farther and rely upon His infinite love. Love includes mercy, and justice does not. Mr. Hopps, like many others, insists upon the identity of the divine and the human attributes, that justice and love mean the same for the creature and for the Creator. This is true. I will not contend just now for any particular definition of the one or the other. It might suffice to say that justice is a principle which secures the maintenance of a true balance between the rights and the receipts of the individual; or, that love is a mighty energy which combines all other attributes and employs them for the promotion of another's good. If these are not satisfactory, let others be adopted. We will at least suppose that some definition of justice has been accepted as sufficient for both heaven and earth. Now comes the test. What the just rights of the individual are in any particular case, cannot be determined without regard to the interests of others. There must be a perfect knowledge of all facts and of all relations; and there must be an unerring judgment. Accord-

ing to the various degrees of this knowledge and judgment, conclusions will differ. The child will not agree with the parent, nor the client with the advocate, nor the criminal with the judge. And yet justice is the same for them all. How much greater is the probable difference between the estimates formed by the creature and the Creator! When we ask what is right, what justice requires, or what love can do, the answer must depend not merely upon the relation of man to man, but also upon that of man to God, and of man, that is of the race, to the universe. Yet the appeal of Mr. Hopps is utterly vain unless it means that the human estimate of what justice requires in any given case, must be regarded as necessarily determining the Divine procedure. We can all accept it as beyond doubt, that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that the Father of the spirits of all flesh will not be unloving; but whereunto His justice, His love will lead, He only can say. Without Divine knowledge and Divine perfection it is impossible to forecast Divine action. We must, therefore, after all, be content to follow the guidance of the one revelation which embodies for us the truth of God, His written Word.

If the written Word is to guide us, we must know its meaning. So we come again to the work

of interpretation, and interpretations are endlessly diverse. The truth is complete and absolute; the paraphrase is neither. Be it so. The handbook is not the less sufficient, and the promised Teacher is not the less faithful and efficient. "He shall guide you into the whole truth," as individuals and, for all practical purposes, as an organised assembly combining for the Master's service. The life of each shall secure the union of all. Faith in Christ the Truth abides steadfast amid the clamour of those who believe not, and no less amid the more dangerous strifes of those who believe.

Mr. Hopps himself furnishes a curious illustration of this diversity in interpretation. He would argue against the hopelessness of "the lost;" and he quotes, "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap." He adds—"If a man could reap an eternity of misery for the sin or the unbelief of a few heedless years, he would not reap what he had sown. The affirmation is that 'whatsoever a man soweth *that* shall he also reap'—not something else, not less or more; and the inference from that is obvious." If Mr. Hopps is right, then the farmer whose seed-corn brings forth a hundred-fold does not reap what he had sown. Nor does he who takes more time to reap the harvest than he had taken to scatter the grain. Nor does he who

soweth "not that body that shall be." The correspondence is one in kind, not in quantity, not in duration. The man who commits a crime sows shame, and he reaps it, though the act of a moment may bring the penalty of a lifetime. The profligate sows corruption, and he reaps it, though the seed-time be long and the woe cometh suddenly at the last. He who rejects life sows death, and he will reap it none the less because the opportunity returns no more for ever.

"He who rejects life"—there, as it seems to me, is the explanation of the whole matter. In these modern days the gravest doubts and the most perplexing difficulties have arisen, or have gathered force, because we so generally persist in dealing with the Bible as a revelation to us of the responsibilities and liabilities of others. Its whole worth lies in the fact that it is intended to be to each of us a message concerning our individual state, need, privilege, and duty. Its declaration of law, its denunciation of sin, its offer of salvation, its most terrible threatenings and its brightest promises, are for all only as they belong to every one. That they are for all is an assurance which guides to personal effort and encourages and strengthens in the discharge of every obligation. It commands the disciple everywhere to make known the truth,

to reprove sin, to oppose wrong, and to supply need; but it neither teaches him nor suffers him to judge another. There is justice for all, and there is mercy for all, and God is good to all; but there are diversities of administration. "Where no law is there is no transgression." "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law." There are Gentiles having no law, who do by nature the things contained in the law, and who thus show the law written in their hearts. They have a conscience, they have an accountability; but God only can measure it. As for the Bible, and our own relation thereto, we may well be thankful that the law and the Gospel go together. We have no commission or authority to threaten any man with the penalties of the one unless we have taken to him the promises of the other. The Apostle Paul when at Athens could draw a sharp distinction between "times of ignorance" and the time of knowledge. "The times of ignorance, therefore, God overlooked; but now He commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." So, too, in writing to the Romans, he can distinguish between the "aforetime" and "this present season." The one propitiation is for all times, and declares the one abiding righteousness: but as to the past it is "to show His righteousness be-

cause of the passing over of the sins done aforetime ;" whilst as to the present it is "for the showing of His righteousness at this present season that He might be just and the justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus." For the "aforetime" the Holy Spirit neither conditions nor will suffer us to condition His bestowment of the benefits of the redemption: for the present season, the condition is "faith in Jesus." Where "the times of ignorance" still continue, we may rest assured that "the passing over" has not ceased. Even there men have their duties, their responsibilities, their dangers and their need; and although we are unable to measure these things, He who knows them fully, commands us to carry thither the blessings of a pure Gospel. But whether we obey Him or not, He is well able to deal with them in accordance with both the justice and the mercy of perfect love. For them also the atonement of Jesus has availed, and in their behalf as surely as in that of the infant of days, the Mediatorship of the God Man is sufficient. To suppose that the Gospel message imposes obligations upon those to whom it never comes, is an assumption which the Bible itself nowhere warrants. Consequently, all that Mr. Hopps and others have urged in favour of a probation after death as rendered necessary by

the assumed inequality, is altogether beside the question.

“He who rejects life.” We must return to these words. The teaching of Scripture cannot be rightly estimated unless it is taken as a whole. Questions of guilt and doom are not separable from those of man’s nature and the true idea of sin. When we speak of human nature we refer to the race as now existing. Whether the New Testament ever uses the word “man” in connection with the after-world, we may leave the curious to inquire. Man, then, is represented as a reasonable soul capable, by means of various mental processes, of communion with the world around him through his bodily nature, and with God above him through his spiritual nature. He has both bodily life and spiritual life. It is his privilege, whilst availing himself of the knowledge which his senses enable him to acquire, to be guided by that higher wisdom which he possesses through fellowship with the Divine Spirit. By the aid of sense and in the light of reason he lives according to the will of God. But in so doing man is not a machine: he is a free agent. On this free agency all social, commercial, and political responsibility rests. It is useless, therefore, to deny it when dealing with moral responsibility. Morality without freedom is

an impossibility. As a free agent, man is able to reject the Divine fellowship with its teaching and guidance. He can assert his own will against that of his Creator, as really as he can assert it against his fellow-man. In this rejection of God lies the sinfulness of sin. Outward action may or may not follow. There may be effectual restraint by God or man. Free will does not necessarily imply free muscle. He who rejects the Divine Spirit, rejects the life which is heavenward. The evil which is thus in him makes his life thenceforward one-sided. He has no direction but that which is earthly and sensuous. He walks according to the flesh. Self-will under fleshly guidance leads to corruption. The flesh is not in itself evil when its due relation to human nature is observed. It is a good servant, but a bad master. When Adam sinned, it was after this fashion. As a result, he could transmit only what he retained. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. The spiritual life is something which by nature his children could not have. The God-Man has brought back what Adam lost, and justification unto life has passed unto all men. His priceless gift is the portion of every one. But the sin of Adam may be repeated and is repeated every day. Divine authority and fellowship are wilfully rejected. This wilful rejection is in itself the self-

infliction of spiritual death, and will sooner or later, if continued, be followed by the divinely-imposed penalty of bodily death.

It is upon this sin of rejection that the New Testament consistently dwells. Whatever may be the varied forms of evil, it is here that the sinfulness of the sin is found. "This is the condemnation—that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." "Ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." "Full well ye reject the counsel of God against yourselves." "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold (or hold down, restrain) the truth in unrighteousness;" for in either case they have the truth and act contrary thereto. It is against these, who thus refuse both the repentance which renounces sin and the faith which welcomes and obeys the manifested Son of God—who turn away from the Father and will not live for their fellow-men—who insist upon making self the centre and the circumference of their action,—it is against these that the doom of the ungodly is declared.

And so we come back to ask what the New Testament says concerning these sinners against

themselves. No one ventures to affirm that the Scripture teaches in so many words the possibility of salvation after death. It must also be maintained that there is nothing in Scripture which either necessarily or reasonably implies it. On the contrary, there is much that excludes it.

In order to estimate the evidence which is forthcoming on the question before us, it is well to distinguish what is said as to the period between death and doom, as to the judgment-day itself, and as to that which shall be thereafter. Let a few examples suffice. What then is to be expected between death and the day of doom? We hear the Saviour say, "Except ye believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins"—"ye shall die in your sin. Whither I go ye cannot come." In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read—"It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." Both of these utterances are in harmony with the record concerning the Rich Man and Lazarus. It is not necessary to determine its exact character. We may leave to others to choose whether they will read it as history or as allegory, and if they accept it as history, whether they will regard it as a strictly objective representation or as one which had its reality only in the inner self of Dives. Deal with it as we may, the lessons cannot be mis-

taken. Men mingle here in daily life ; but when the boundary line is passed, thenceforward "there is a great gulf fixed," and none can pass from good to evil, or from evil to good. Yet more, the influences that are at work in this world are not only sufficient, they are also complete. "If they will not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." If they will not give heed to the experience and testimony of the living, no additional hope can be gathered for them from the experience of Hades. So clearly do we find repeated the older testimony, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for in the grave whither thou goest there is no device."

If we pass onward to the judgment, finality is stamped on all that is revealed. Everywhere there is the evidence that as compared with the economy of mercy proclaimed in this world, a change has taken place which is more than a change. Here and now, the cry authorised by the Divine Saviour, and repeated by His servants, is "Come!" But then and there, it is to be the fearful "Depart!" The sinful are to be "cast out—cast out into outer darkness." Unfaithful messengers must depart as workers of iniquity. They who have failed to work the works of righteous

well-doing towards their needy fellow-men, must "depart under a curse into the everlasting fire." Of all that are then condemned it is said, "These shall go away into eternal punishment." No series of utterances could easily be framed which would more hopelessly exclude the notion of prolonged probation.

Beyond that day of doom as concerning the condition of the condemned the record does not lead us. The wicked "go," they are "cast out," their lot thenceforward is one of "eternal punishment." Conscious existence is embodied in every word; but "the wages of sin is death," the destruction of both body and soul of each according to its kind. We are told that "death" must be taken to mean then what it means now. Be it so. If it does not, no other meaning has been revealed. If it does, we know what is now meant by spiritual death, and what by bodily death. As surely as it is true that neither of the two interrupts conscious existence, so true is it that in death there is no promise or hope of life. And the same Scripture which in presence of the grave foretells resurrection for all men, also declares that "the second death" shall be "eternal punishment." Upon the doomed the darkness falls, and concerning them revelation ceases.

We do not forget, however, that there are some few Scripture passages and expressions which have been regarded as favouring what has been strangely called "eternal hope." One of these is the saying of the Lord Jesus concerning the unpardonable sin—"it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come." These words are accepted as meaning that in some sense sins not forgiven in this world may be forgiven in the next. But this does not warrant the conclusion that there is forgiveness hereafter for those who are wilfully impenitent in this life. So long as the passage can be interpreted in harmony with other parts of Scripture, it cannot be assumed that it implies a doctrine for which the Scripture nowhere gives its authority. The passage can be so interpreted. St. Peter teaches that men may be "judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." There may be manifest judgment in the sight of man, whilst there is spiritual life in the presence of God. Similarly St. John recognises a sin which is unto death, and also a sin which is not unto death; where the death of which he speaks can only be that of the body. The sinner is not the less regarded as a brother. St. Paul also, when reproving the Christians at Corinth for their irreverent

dealing with the Holy Communion, says, "for this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep." The "sleep" here spoken of cannot be understood as "the taking of rest in sleep." There is nothing to imply that it is used to imply a spiritual insensibility. The Apostle's usage warrants us in applying the term to Christian death. Certainly there is no other place where St. Paul uses this word in any other sense. All these passages are in harmony with the suggestion that the physical penalty, not merely of the race sin, but of individual sins, may follow the sinner to the end of his earthly life, even though in his spiritual relationships he may be truly accepted of God in Christ. Such a temporal penalty followed Moses the man of God, who nevertheless appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration. Of probation after death we find nothing.

Other passages upon which much stress is often laid are the two which are found in the First Epistle of Peter. As to the interpretation of these, it is not to be supposed that the Church militant here upon earth will ever agree. For our present purpose I am content to accept them as a simple historical statement of what the Lord Jesus did during the three days of his absence from the body. He upon whom the sin-penalty, death, had fallen, was put to

death as to the flesh, but was made alive as to the spirit; and as a quickened spirit He went and declared in Hades the fact of His effective intervention and atonement. Here is a special messenger on a special occasion declaring a new message to a congregation that is undescribed, but certainly to those who had never heard His words. The dead Christ assuredly went into Paradise; and remembering the story of Lazarus and the rich man, we cannot forget the great gulf fixed and not to be passed. I do not stay to discuss the mercy shown to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah. Where is the slightest intimation in St. Peter's words, that the offer of salvation by faith in Christ was ever made in Hades to those who, being within hearing of the Gospel on earth, had wilfully neglected its warnings and rejected alike its promises and its commands?

If indeed it were a question of development, of growth, there would be small space for contention. Many will refuse to regard the intermediate state as one of stagnation, who as steadfastly refuse to look upon it as one of probation.

There remains to be considered the argument that is based upon those passages which speak of the reconciliation of all things. If the interpretation which is favoured by Mr. Hopps and others

is correct, then of course there is not only a possibility of salvation after death, but also a certainty of salvation after the final doom.

In Philippians ii. 9, 10 we read, "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a Name above every name: that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, whether of those in heaven, or of those in earth, or of those under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Here there is much about the exaltation of Christ, nothing about the restoration of evil men. It is the Divine purpose that in the one name all prayer should be offered and all homage paid, that the anointed Saviour should be acknowledged as Divine. To this acknowledgment, as we read in the Gospels, even the demons were constrained. Nevertheless the passage no more foretells the reclamation of all sinful ones than do the words of St. Paul to Timothy, "who will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth."

In Ephesians i. 10 we read, "To sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth;" and again in Colossians i. 20, "through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens." In both we read of "all things," but in

both they are the things in heaven and on earth. There is no third term. A fair, reasonable and sufficient interpretation is that which refers the "summing up" and the "reconciliation" to the angelic and human dispensations—the manifestations of Divine justice and mercy. In Christ Jesus "mercy and truth have met together"—the truth which passed by the angel rebels and the mercy which took hold upon the nature of man. The punishment of the impenitent and the pardon of the penitent are harmonised in Him. In the day of His final manifestation it will be made evident to all, that He is the complete and symmetrical revelation of the Divine character, explaining all mysteries and justifying all seeming paradoxes.

There is a work of reconciliation which immediately concerns men, not separate from but included in the previous passages. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself," yet immediately afterwards we read, "We pray you in the behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled unto God." Very certain is it, therefore, that the reconciliation of the race does not necessarily imply the salvation of the individual.

In 1 Corinthians xv. 28 we read, "All things shall be subdued unto Him," and "that God may be all in all." As to the former clause, there

are several like unto it. He will "put all enemies under His feet;" but this does not imply that they will cease to be enemies. He may end their power, may deprive them of all opportunity for working ill to any, may even remove them from the relationships of associated activity, and yet they may retain the consciousness of their own abiding hate and of unceasing restraint and punishment. They are completely subdued, utterly destroyed, in every sense dead, and yet enemies while thus under His feet.

Then, too, as to the latter clause, there is no warrant for reading it "all in all men." The Apostle has been speaking of the mediatorial kingdom of the Incarnate Son. As the Son of Man He now rules over all things, and this as man and for men. There is coming a day when the conflict shall be ended, and when all things shall be subdued unto Him. Till then He reigns the Crowned Man. But when that day shall come, and He shall by His one act of final judgment have closed the dispensations of angels and of men, "He shall deliver up the kingdom unto God, even the Father." "Then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that did put all things under Him,"—the mediating Humanity shall cease to sit as King over the universe, the Fatherhood shall be recognised in

the relationship of actual supremacy, and God as God shall be "all in all." But there is not in this one word as to the possibility, still less the certainty, that any enemy will pass from "under His feet" into the ranks of those "that are Christ's at His coming."

Thus does it appear that in the direct teaching of Scripture there is nothing to justify, but much to exclude, the expectation of further probation after death for those who now hold the truth in unrighteousness. What the Master has not authorised, the messenger may not publish. No one can profess that the opinion in question is at best anything more than a deduction; and the premises from which it is supposed to be drawn are not only assumed, but they are such as human experience cannot test and Divine testimony does not warrant. To announce this guess as though it were a part of the truth, would be itself a crime. Wherever it is taught it can only act as a temptation to delay, and, therefore, as a lure to destruction. If believed and acted upon, even though the belief were ever so sincere, the mistake when discovered could never be pleaded as an excuse. To refuse obedience to the law of love, and to continue in wilful sin because it is expected that after self-indulgence and wrongdoing in this life there will be a possibility of

escaping the consequences, could only be regarded as an aggravation of the evil. No uncertainty as to penalty could be pleaded in arrest of judgment. It cannot even in human courts. It is not for the guidance of calculating criminals, but for the protection of society that penalties are introduced into the laws of civilised nations. A brutish man may sometimes miscalculate the punishment of his violence; but the magistrate does not therefore refrain from the heavier sentence. And where love is law, the notion that the sinner can claim the right to measure beforehand the suffering which his sin will bring upon himself, is simply self-contradictory. Where love rules, such self-interest has no standing-place.

Here one might let the matter rest. Nevertheless it is not to be forgotten that this notion of "eternal hope," of hope for one who wilfully rejects present opportunity, is utterly and in every sense unscientific. Not only is it contrary to the whole tenor of the Gospel offer, but it contradicts the experience of daily life and the analogies supplied by the conclusions of physical science.

As to the Gospel, its message is available only in the present moment. "This is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation." There are promises to encourage the hope of every sinner who, desiring

to be free from sin, accepts help from God; but there is neither hope nor promise for him who rejects the help that he may hold fast the sin. There are pressing offers of a present salvation; but there is not one for next year, for to-morrow, for the next moment. How then can it be imagined that there is any for the next world. Surely it is a wonderful boldness which dares to proclaim an "eternal hope" for those for whom the Gospel proclaims none—not even for a passing hour.

In daily life we know that the diligent use of present advantage is the only rational ground for expecting success in the future. In action the present is everything. We can do nothing to-morrow. The past is gone, the future is not here; we live our whole life in the unceasing "now." It is very true that in the passing years, there come for most men a series of opportunities, not indeed for remedying past neglect, but for entering upon a more prudent course. Yet no one will affirm that human life offers to the negligence of to-day an assurance of time for reconsideration to-morrow. Its voice on this subject is as stern and, if it may be said, as relentless as that of the material world.

If we turn to physical science as explained and enforced by its modern teachers, then there is no "to-morrow" which is not the outcome of, and,

therefore, in sure harmony with "to-day." The theory of evolution affirms and emphasises this principle, and does so in many cases to the extreme of denying the possibility of any new beginning. Mr. Hopps is not forgetful of it when he attempts to base his argument for the future upon the assumption that every man under all circumstances is "a naturally progressive being." "Salvation," however, is itself a new beginning, for it is the effect produced by the entrance of a new life. It is not consistent with the nature of man that this life should be imposed contrary to his own free will. Where it is rejected, there is no new beginning, no new direction, and, therefore, there can be no scientific anticipation of any development to-morrow other than what is in strict keeping with the evil of to-day. Man as to his moral being, by the choice of evil and the rejection of good, determines his own environment, his own development, and his own destiny.

And so every one of us shall give account of himself to God. The discrimination, the severity, the tenderness of His judgments in that day, no man can now describe, but every man will then approve. The salvation of the righteous and the destruction of the evil will be alike from Him. His mercy cannot do what His justice forbids, nor will

His justice forbid what His mercy desires. In neither can He deny Himself. In both He will ever act in full harmony with that infinite love which in Him as in us is the girdle of perfectness.

The lot of the righteous has been foretold and pictured in many ways. Upon the portion of the wicked a pall of thick darkness rests—a darkness which human wisdom can neither lift nor penetrate. As to the home of the blessed, it is the Father's house; and as to their condition, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." As to the abiding-place of the self-doomed, they disappear as they depart into the everlasting fire, whatever that may be; and as to their condition, what God has not revealed, man cannot discover.

What that "second death" will be, no man has a right to know. It was never intended for him. His duty is to love God in loving and caring for his fellowmen, and thus to be ready for heaven's perfect life. Who will ever know what it means, God only can foresee. Man cannot forecast the future, and his guesses are worse than vain. It is enough for him to know his own duty and privilege, his own responsibility and danger. The Spirit and the Word, conscience and opportunity, combine to bring home to him, if he will give heed, his resources in the Father's love declared by the one atonement,

and the measure of his duty to his fellow-man. If he will not heed, it is not his misfortune, but his fault.

Many there are who give earnest heed, yet find it no easy thing in a world so full of sin and suffering to walk with simple, patient trust. Turning hither and thither they see the thronging multitudes, and know that every one amongst them is a brother. He may be dark Kaffir or subtle Hindoo, superstitious devotee or bewildered doubter, trained thief or gutter child; yet the half-yearning, half-curious question ever and anon is heard, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" And from the lips which uttered the unrepealed command, "Love thy neighbour as thyself," "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," there comes the one unfailing answer—"What is that to thee? Follow thou Me!"

ARTICLE XI.

BY THE REV. STOPFORD A. BROOKE, M.A.

AFTER death, is there a state of probation or not?

No one, now-a-days, who believes in God as the Father of men, denies that in this world we are subjects of the testing of God, subjects, if the testing ends in the salvation of those who are tested, of His education. The only question is, whether the probation—in the case of those who die unrepentant—is closed or not at death. The view held by the present writer is that probation, or the state of trial, never ceases for any soul of man until he is brought into that harmony with God's will which means righteousness; but there are three alternative views.

The *first* is that held by some who either say that there is no God, and therefore no immortality; or that they know nothing of God, and therefore nothing of immortality. Their view is that man, having been tested here by the circumstances in which he lives, perishes altogether as an individual existence at death. His probation ends, whether

he be good or bad, in personal annihilation. It is a comfortable doctrine for those who choose to take their own way and follow their own desires. It is a melancholy doctrine for those who choose to give up their own way for the sake of others. Out of the testing they have produced good for future men, and have themselves lived nobly. But the radical misfortune of their view of life and death is that the humanity they benefit is dying, and will, one and all, be in the end as if it never had been. It matters little if a million years more belong to the human race. The end is a mighty failure, and the better and nobler the race becomes, the more absurd and tragic is the impotent close of all in universal death. Of all possible views, this is the most insolent to the affections, and the most paradoxical for the intellect. It is the apotheosis of waste.

The *second* view has some resemblance to this, but it is less logical, and it has faith in God and immortality. But it modifies its faith to suit its desire to easily solve this problem. It holds that those who have proved themselves righteous and believing are saved, but that the others, who have failed in the test, not being worthy of immortality, are personally annihilated! There is some evidence that this may have been the view of the writers of

some of the Epistles. Of course, among those of this opinion no belief exists in any probation after death. The good are absolutely saved, the evil absolutely destroyed. But this opinion has some comfort in it. We are not forced by it to think that the wicked are doomed to that immortal torture which God, in order to prove His goodness to the universe, is supposed by those who cling to the third view to inflict upon the myriads of men, women, and children whom His omnipotent love is impotent to save from the eternal grasp of hate.

The *third* view is that of those who believe with so much eagerness in eternal evil; who make two Master Beings in the universe, and honour the best, whom they call God the Father, by giving the other, whom they call the devil, the practical victory over God in the battle for the souls of men. The devil carries off, with the infernal joy of hatred, vengeance, pride, envy, and scorn, two-thirds of the human race into his kingdom, and holds them there for ever and ever in despite of God. Or, God sanctions (when He could prevent it, since His love and goodness and justice are omnipotent) the existence of evil as co-eternal with Himself. This astonishing conception, both of humanity and God, directly derived from heathendom and

savagery, from imperial theories and aristocracies, from all the barbarisms, was reserved for modern Protestantism to adopt in all its fulness, and has been, in our days, the fruitful parent of the greater part of the silent or violent atheism in this country and in Europe. A great deal of argument has been employed against it, and perhaps argument was at first useful in order to shake its hold on the minds of men. But at present, when even those who hold it are ashamed to state it, it is waste of time and of intelligence to discuss it. The proper way to meet it is to call it what it is—an intolerable and abominable lie, an opinion of darkness and death, and to repeat again and again, without any argument whatever, this determined and indignant denial.

I said it was reserved for modern Protestantism to adopt in all its fulness this view of the impossibility of probation after death, because the Roman Catholic, even of the darkest age, when all Europe was accustomed to cruelty, was not able to endure its unmixed horror, and unable to conceive its God. The Roman Church, and we owe it a great debt for this, modified this view of eternal hatred. It created purgatory; it created something like the idea of probation after death. Almost every one had a chance of purgatory. In severe punishment

after death the sins of those who were able even in the hour of dissolution to call on God with a single tear were purged away, and during the purgation they were freed from the possibility of sinning any more. In this last sense they were not in a state of probation; but nevertheless the idea was conceived that death did not settle the question at once of heaven and hell. There are many practical evils connected with the doctrine of purgatory, but they did less harm to the world than the good the doctrine itself did on the side of mercy and justice and love—on the side, to put it otherwise, of a true and noble conception of God.

The proper contradiction to all these views is that contained in the just conception of God, in the conception which is derived from the ideas of Jesus concerning our Father, and from the thought of mankind educated by the Spirit of God.

The conception of God contains the thought of His Absolute Being, and this means that He is the source of all existence. All existences, and more especially (as nearer to His central nature) all intelligent and spiritual existences, must have flowed forth from Him, are necessarily kindred to Him, nay, belong to Him. Detached from Him they could be nothing, would be annihilated. But,

if the hypothesis be true, they cannot be detached from Him. That which has been in God can never be separated from Him. A spiritual being which has come from Him can never be wholly outside of Him, can never be destroyed, unless we think that a portion of God Himself can be destroyed. The moment we face the thought of the annihilation of a spirit who has had its source in God (if we conceive of God as Absolute Being) the thought becomes unthinkable. It is an absurdity. We *cannot* perish, if God is. If He is not, and we are mere concourses of atoms, why then, it is logical enough to say that we are resolved into atoms again; but if we believe in the absolute being of God, it is infinitely absurd to talk of the destruction of any spiritual life whatever. It is only the atheist who can properly think annihilation. To the theist of any kind, from the Mahometan and Persian to the Christian, immortality is now a logical necessity—not only a matter of faith, but of intellect.

Yes; but of what kind? Is it an immortality of evil and the pain of evil for all the unrepentant of earth? Is that the law? In answer, we fall back on the idea of God which Jesus Christ has given us, which the Spirit of God has developed in the thought of men. The Absolute Being, if

He is God, must be absolutely good, loving, true, and just ; and merciful, because mercy is necessarily contained in the union of love and justice.

Absolute goodness—that is, God—cannot, without ceasing to be good, permit the existence of eternal evil, when He has the power to put an end to it ; and if His power does not extend so far, He is not omnipotent, and therefore a lower Being than the conception which He has given to us of Himself. The dilemma is plain. If He is good, and does not put an end to evil, He is evidently not omnipotent. If He is omnipotent, and does not put an end to evil, He is not good. And in the one case or the other He is beneath our conception of God—a conception which, on the supposition that there is a God who has to do with us—a Father, as Christ said—He has Himself wrought and developed in us. At every point we are brought face to face with an absurdity.

Again, absolute love cannot, without ceasing to be love, have the power to make all spiritual beings loving, and yet refuse to exercise that power ; and not only refuse to exercise it, but do the very opposite—hand over millions for endless time to the embrace of hate ; nor can absolute truth declare that falsehood shall be eternal.

As to absolute justice, not a shred of it is left, if

men have no capacity for redemption in the other world. To punish sixty years of sin by infinite pain is an injustice to which the worst of earthly tyrants would not stoop ; and to punish sin by binding on men the doom of everlasting continuance in sin is so intolerably absurd now, that the author of such a law would be held on earth to be unfit to exercise justice over the meanest of mankind.

Two objections may be made to these views. First, that they assume that love, justice, and goodness in Man are the same in kind as they are in God. Certainly our notions of love, justice, and goodness must come from God, if there is a God ; and, moreover, if they are not the same in kind as God's, why then there can be no argument, nay, no thinking at all upon the subject of right and wrong in relation to God. We have no data.

The second objection is, that if God's love and justice, being absolute, constrain Him to put an end to evil, they ought to have restrained Him from permitting its temporary existence. This is the old problem of the origin of evil, and the answer which may be suggested is this : " That the temporary existence of evil was necessary in order to have in the universe Humanity, that is, a race of spirits who should conquer goodness through

struggle, and in the struggle evolve all the special qualities of Humanity"—make a new thing, that is, in the universe. I hold that for this purpose—provided all souls are perfect at last—the result, which contains all the history, effort, art, law, religion, knowledge, and progress of man, is worth, and will be more than worth, all the suffering and evil man has borne and done.

And as to the other limb of the objection—How does evil exist at all in a universe which has come from an absolutely good God? how do I know whether evil has any existence at all in the universe other than a relative existence? It may be no more *actual* than matter is by many supposed to be. Indeed, that seems to stand to reason, if God be absolute.

Now all these conclusions with regard to God and man in the future state are doubled in force when we believe in what Jesus Christ said of God. He called Him Father. Fatherhood not only contains a call made on the children to do the will of the father, but a declaration on the part of the father that he will fulfil the office of a father to all his children. No father worth the name—one must conceive of God as the ideal Father—would leave his children to perish, would permit one of them to fail irredeemably into evil, would ever cease to love

the worst of them ; and this is the testimony of Jesus to God in the parables of the lost sheep and the prodigal son. The first positive duty of a father is the education of his children. And if the Father is absolute goodness and love, the first duty He will impose on Himself—to use human terms to express what belongs to God—will be to educate all His children—that is, every soul of man—into union with Himself, to make them eternal with Himself in life, in love, in righteousness. *And that is the destiny of every human being.* It is plain that very few attain that on earth. The education, then, if this doctrine be true, must be continued in the world to come. There will be then a state of probation there, a state in which the imperfect soul will be put through test, trial, trouble ; will be proved again and again by divers circumstances, by new duties, by joys and inspirations as well as by sorrows and depressions—a state in which good will be developed and evil consumed, but which will be, in one particular, negative of the idea contained in the word probation. For probation implies the possibility of the final failure of the soul to attain the end of goodness, to reach which the time of probation is given ; but in the state of trial here supposed, the end is secure. Righteousness will finally be

reached; evil will be finally burnt up by the consuming fire of God's persistent education.

With this condition the future state will be a state of probation. The doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, preached by Jesus, died for by Him, developed by His Spirit working through God in the heart of man, makes it certain in the realm of faith. All that a father on earth—if we conceive the very best we can—would do to make the son or daughter of his deepest love a perfect man or woman, God will do a thousand thousandfold for every soul of mankind. They will be brought into full and divine development, changed into the image of Christ by the spirit of the Lord.

And, if immortality be true, this is the natural thing, the thing our minds and hearts, the higher they reach, prophesy to us, the thing that the revelation by science of the ultimate law of the universe makes almost a necessity. If we continue to live, we do not remain fixed in one condition. We either advance or retrograde. To retrograde, except for further advance, is to get deeper and deeper in evil, and that is impossible if God be Omnipotent Goodness. Therefore it remains that we should advance, and the advance of every individual is the advance of the whole. That then to which we look is the infinite evolution towards an infinite

end of good of the whole race of man. And this, it seems, was at times St. Paul's idea, not consciously held, for it was scarcely possible to formulate it then, but felt by him in hours of high inspiration from the living God ; put aside, no doubt, when he began to analyse, when he was led astray by the understanding ; but always returning in the hours when he trusted God and humanity, when he was most like his Master Jesus, most Christian and least Pauline ; expressed in many noble sayings which fill us with delight, and in none more forcibly than in the great epistle of the universal Church, when borne away in the ardour of his conception he cried : " Till we all come, in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto the perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

ARTICLE XII.

REV. C. E. BABUT, B.D.

WE come into the presence of a momentous question—Shall the time immediately following death be a time of purification, during which the Christian will achieve his sanctification, and the impenitent, or, at least, those of them who had not heard the Gospel upon earth, will still be given a chance of conversion? We find no reply to this question in Paul's epistles. They contain no declaration bearing any analogy with the famous passage in 1 Peter relative to the message of salvation which Jesus Christ after His death has borne to the spirits that were in prison (1 Pet. iii. 19; iv. 6). True, Paul speaks of a fire, the symbol of judgment, that will prove each man's work; the workman whose work will not resist this fire, but who, notwithstanding, will have built on the true foundation, Jesus Christ, will be saved as through fire; but Paul does not add that through this fire he will be purified (1 Cor. iii. 11-15; cf. Mark ix. 49). In speaking of the incestuous sinner of

Corinth, Paul declares that he has delivered him unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus ; but it does not necessarily follow from these words that this sinner's amendment must or can take place after his death. The same uncertainty exists as regards a remarkable passage of the Second Epistle to Timothy (i. 16-18). Paul therein expresses his desire that "the Lord may grant mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus ;" from this mode of expression many have inferred, and not without some show of reason, that Onesiphorus himself was dead. Next comes the enumeration of the services rendered to Paul by Onesiphorus, then this wish : "The Lord grant unto him to find mercy of the Lord in that day." If the hypothesis we have before brought forward is founded, we may almost take this as a wish, nay, even as a prayer for the salvation of one already dead. This were indeed a very fragile basis for a doctrine or a practice which is supported by no formal text whatever ! Let us not go beyond that which is written.

The dead shall rise again. We have already stated that Paul speaks only of the resurrection of the just, which alone deserves the name of resurrection ; to it alone, therefore, relate the developments upon which we shall now enter. The dead will be

raised up together at the time of the Lord's second coming. We find no trace whatever in Paul's writings of the distinction between a first and second resurrection, which notion has been based upon a passage in the Apocalypse, nor of the hypothesis in virtue of which each individual would be raised up solitarily, as soon as the spiritual labour which is supposed to be pursued after death would have attained its full maturity.

The question of the *cause* or *principle of the resurrection* will meet with different replies, according to the view taken of the subject. The resurrection of the faithful, as well as that of Jesus Himself, will be, first of all, an effect of God's power, the most surprising of all, but in nowise incredible for whoever verily believes in God (Acts xxvi. 8). But we must add that God will raise the dead through Christ, even as through Him He saves sinners. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the human and historical principle of the resurrection. Not only in this sense that, by His own resurrection, He has brought the future resurrection into evidence and guaranteed its certainty; Paul's expressions reach even further than this: "For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 21, 22).

Jesus Christ is a life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. xv. 45) : for He introduces in the world a new power, that of the spiritual or pneumatoscopic life ; He establishes a new law, that of the resurrection.

Some here will perhaps raise a question which is at the same time an objection : " If there is a resurrection of the unrighteous, is it also connected with the resurrection of Christ as the effect with the cause ? " We must assert that Paul is utterly silent on this point ; but, if we understand him well, his doctrine leads to a negative answer. Without Jesus Christ, and outside of Jesus Christ, there will, doubtless, be a certain return of the dead to existence, in view of the final judgment ; but the resurrection for life eternal is a benefit, a boon conferred by Him who is the Firstborn from the dead (Col. i. 18).

As we become partakers of the benefits of redemption by faith alone, in becoming members of Christ's body and sharers in His Spirit, the resurrection of the faithful has an inward principle, the Holy Ghost. " God shall quicken your mortal bodies through (or because of) His Spirit that dwelleth in you " (Rom. viii. 11). When He gives us His spirit, God creates in us the germ of the new and heavenly being which shall bud forth, so to speak, at the resurrection. Having triumphed

inwardly, life will triumph outwardly. So has it been with Jesus Christ: God has raised Him through His power (2 Cor. xiii. 4), and His resurrection has been at the same time the manifestation of that Spirit of holiness according to which He is Son of God (Rom. i. 4).

Paul himself asks, "How are the dead raised? and with what manner of body do they come?" Foolish is he who asks this question in a spirit of doubt and unbelief, setting at naught the power of God, the wonderful diversity of His works, and the striking analogies of Nature which reveal to us life springing from death (1 Cor. xv. 35-41). Paul, however, answers the question he has himself asked, and this appears to us to be the substance of his teaching. The raised body shall be a true body, possessing certain visible and material aspects, since it will be conformed to (*σύμμορφον*, Phil. iii. 21) the glorified body of Christ which Paul has beheld with his own eyes. The expression *spiritual body* must be understood to imply that this new body shall be a docile instrument and a transparent organ of the spirit. We may say that it shall be to the glorified saint what the Shekinah, the luminous cloud of the sanctuary, was to Jehovah. This body shall be the opposite of the actual body by all its qualities, incorruptibility, power, glory, spiri-

tuality (1 Cor. xv. 42-44). It is to be observed that, in the series of contrasts mentioned here, "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption," &c., the parallel is drawn between the future body and the actual body, not the corpse; the corpse could not be called a natural body. Therefore, it is likewise between the actual body (not the corpse) and the future body that the sort of identity or continuity implied by the phrase "*It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption*" exists. In what does this relation between the two bodies consist? Not in the similarity of the attributes or qualities which characterise them, since we have seen that, on this point, there is a complete opposition between them. Not in the identity of the material substance of which they are composed. This hypothesis appears to be utterly set at naught by the following proposition: "The first is of the earth, earthy; the second man is of heaven" (1 Cor. xv. 47). Elsewhere also (2 Cor. v. 1) Paul calls the future body "a building from God, a house not made with hands," thus designating it as an immediate creation of God, and opposing its heavenly origin to the earthly origin of the actual body. The thought of the Apostle, rendered in modern phrase, appears to be this: The actual body is the more or less adequate expression of

our individuality ; this same individuality, having attained perfection, will shine forth in the future body. It is an averred fact that, during the years which constitute the average duration of a man's life, the ponderable matter of the body is more than once fully renewed ; the identity of our body is not, consequently, that of this matter. The permanence of our individuality is made evident by the concrete fact that the risen saints shall be recognisable.

After the resurrection shall come the judgment. Paul makes no mention of an individual judgment following immediately upon death. Before the tribunal of God or Jesus Christ—for it is by Jesus Christ, by the Man He hath ordained, that God will judge the world (Acts xvii. 31)—two classes of men shall appear, the good and the wicked, the saved and the condemned ; this dualism exists throughout the whole of Scripture. It even seems as though Paul considered the judgment of Christians and non-Christians as two successive acts ; for he says that “saints shall judge the world” (1. Cor. vi. 2), which they cannot do unless they have themselves come out of the trial victoriously.

Thus, although justified by faith, we shall be judged according to our works : “We must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that each one may receive the things done

in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. v. 10). No doubt the judgment will be very different for the Christian and for the impenitent souls. For the Christian there is no day of wrath; the prospect of the judgment, while remaining a motive for serious reflection and constant watchfulness, has ceased to be an object of terror. Nevertheless, in so far as he is concerned, the law which requires that each shall reap what he shall have sown is not abolished; it is nowhere more rigorously expressed than in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, in which Paul expounds the gospel of justification by faith. This justification is, above all, a Divine means for leading man to holiness; it is the entrance upon the path of salvation; but having once entered upon this path, man must walk in it faithfully, and on this point the judgment shall bear. If a man who professes to be a Christian should be found to have done evil instead of good, it would necessarily be inferred either that he has never belonged to Christ, or that he has "fallen away from grace" (Gal. v. 6); we do not here enter upon the fearful question of final perseverance. In either case, his lot is with the impenitent. As for those who shall have served God, their reward shall be proportionate to their fidelity.

Yes, their reward : St. Paul shrinks neither from the word nor from the idea, though he warns us that the reward in question is the "recompense of the inheritance" (Col. iii. 24), a recompense which has its first condition in the act of grace by which God has adopted us as His children, and which cannot, consequently, be identified with a salary. There will be various degrees in the future felicity or glory ; the harvest of each individual will correspond with his sowing, both as regards quantity and quality (Gal. vi. 7, 8 ; 1 Cor. ix. 6). But, some may ask, what of the evil deeds of true Christians? does not St. Paul say that "every man shall receive according to the good or evil he shall have committed?" We cannot suppose that there is a punishment in reserve for saved souls, except it be a negative punishment, that which is implied in these words of the last passage quoted : "He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly." There will doubtless be a corresponding difference of degree in the penalties inflicted upon the wicked ; both as regards salvation and condemnation the Jew comes before the Greek (Rom. ii. 9, 10).

After the resurrection and the judgment, life eternal and heaven await the Christian. Heaven ! Paul was caught up there in an hour of ecstasy

(2 Cor. xii. 1, 4); but he declares that the things he heard cannot be told. Such silence is more eloquent than many a discourse. We shall not essay to define the terms used by Paul on this occasion, and which he seems to have borrowed from the popular Jewish theology of his day, the terms *paradise* and *third heaven*, together with a third expression, which he uses familiarly, "the heavens;" they can only serve to give us a foretaste of the riches and variety of the invisible world. Let us add that, since the Apostle admits the possibility of having been caught up to the third heaven, we cannot eliminate completely the idea of region or locality in connection with the future abode of the saved. Paul is too deeply imbued with biblical realism to say with the mystic school, "Heaven is a certain state of the soul." His dogma of a bodily resurrection leads to the same conclusion.

It is with a singular sobriety and spirituality that the Apostle expresses himself on the subject of that heaven of which he does not speak at much length, but which evidently holds the uppermost place in his thoughts, and which is the home of his soul and hopes. He does not possess the same richness of imagination, the same brilliancy of colouring as the author of the Apocalypse. But the traits in which he pictures the felicity of

heaven are profound and striking. Heaven is the "inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. i. 12), a new Canaan, in which every sanctified Christian shall have his portion, as of old each Israelite had his apportioned lot in the Holy Land (Acts xxvi. 18).

There are tender and sympathetic souls, too earthly still, in truth, of which we may say that the hope of meeting beyond the grave those whom they have loved here below is all their heaven and well-nigh all their religion. The Apostle is far from sharing this pre-occupation as fully as they; he, nevertheless, confirms their hope in so far as it rests upon a faith common alike to those that mourn and to those that are mourned for. In his touching adieux to the elders of Ephesus, we observe with something like surprise that Paul, seeing the sorrow of his friends at his approaching departure, does not bid them look forward to the meeting above. Yet he speaks to the Corinthians and Thessalonians of the day when they shall appear with him before the Lord to be his glory and his joy (2 Cor. iv. 14; 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20). But the most striking passage on this subject is in the note to Philemon: "Perhaps he (Onesimus) was parted from thee for a season, that thou shouldest have him for ever" (Philemon x. 5).

This assuredly implies that the relations and affections of Christians are to last throughout all eternity.

Why must we leave behind those radiant prospects to endeavour to pierce through the gloom which envelops the future of the wicked? However painful and delicate this part of our task be, we cannot avoid it. "If thou sayest nothing of hell," says Chrysostom, "shall thy silence extinguish it?" Let us at least remain within the limits of the question placed before us. The point in question, for the present, is to know what Paul taught concerning the final destiny of the impenitent. We rigorously abstain from all considerations drawn from the internal probability or improbability of the doctrines, and we refer to the declarations of the other sacred writers only in so far as they may be needed to cast light upon the thought and language of the Apostle.

We go not back to the question of knowing whether there will be a continuation of the state of trial, and, consequently, a possible restoration after death, at least for a certain number. Paul is not explicit on this point. Let us travel in thought beyond the limits of the present economy. The dead are risen again, if this sorrowful return to a life which is not spiritual or eternal life, may

be called a resurrection. They are judged and condemned. What, for them, will be the consequences of this condemnation?

We are here in presence of three different systems: universalism, according to which, a punishment of longer or shorter duration must end at length in a universal rehabilitation; the doctrine of eternal punishment or suffering; finally, that of conditional immortality, or of the annihilation of the wicked.

Which, according to St. Paul, is right, and which are wrong?

Universalism takes two or three of the Apostle's declarations as its exegetical basis. Let us examine:—

“God willeth that all men should be saved” (1 Tim. ii. 4). The will in question here is not one which imposes itself and necessarily produces the desired result. This is rendered obvious by the parallel passage (2 Pet. iii. 9): “He is longsuffering to youward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” The context shows that the effect of this merciful will of God is the deferring of the Parousia, and that it acts on this side the final crisis.

Several declarations of St. Paul seem to indicate that the universality of redemption is equal to the

universality of the fall. "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all" (Rom. xi. 32). "As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22). It is to be observed that the direct object of these passages is not to cast light upon the future of the wicked, but rather to display the plan of God for the salvation of the world (comp. John iii. 17). They teach, doubtless, the universality of salvation; but this is or can only be a virtual, hypothetical universality, as M. Godet says in his commentary on Romans, and which does not exclude for each human individual the fearful power of setting at naught God's purpose concerning him, as expressed in Luke vii. 30. Is it not in this sense that Paul himself defines and limits his thought when he says, "If by the trespass of the one, death reigned through the one, much more shall *they that receive* the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ"? (Rom. v. 17). As to the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which at first sight seems so favourable to universalism, we must remark that Paul entirely excludes non-

believers, for he presents the resurrection as a universal fact, but the description he makes of it can absolutely apply only to the resurrection of the just.

True, universalism brings forward other sayings which not only give expression to God's plan and purpose, but which also bear a prophetic character. Thus we read in this same fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "When all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all" (28). "The last enemy that shall be abolished is death" (26). "Then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (54). And in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "A hardening in part hath befallen Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in; and so all Israel shall be saved" (25, 26). This passage evidently treats of the salvation of the nations, and does not (or may not) exclude individual resistance to Divine grace. As to the passages quoted from 1 Cor. xv., while we are reminded that this chapter treats only of the future of Christians, we acknowledge that they are difficult to conciliate with the doctrine of eternal punishment. So long as there will be, were it

in the remotest corner of the universe, an abode where millions and millions of beings will be suffering torment from eternity to eternity, can it be said that death is abolished and that God is all in all? However this be, these declarations of Paul, even when taken in their widest and most absolute sense, neither attack nor contradict the third hypothesis, that of the final annihilation of the wicked, since, according to the latter, good alone is immortal, and a time shall come when, in the most complete sense of the term, God shall be all in all.

The passages in question are, therefore, susceptible of another interpretation than that given to them by universalism, and which is most difficult to maintain in presence of the many texts in which the Apostle, speaking now most explicitly of the final destiny of the wicked, defines it by the words death, perdition, destruction *θάνατος, ἀπώλεια, φθορά, ὄλεθρος*), without ever giving us to understand that a hope of restoration is left them. "God shall destroy him," says he (1 Cor. iii. 17). "Their end is perdition" (*ὡν τὸ τέλος ἀπώλεια*, Phil. iii. 19). "Eternal destruction" awaits them (2 Thess. i. 9). "God is not mocked: he that soweth unto his own flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. vi. 8). If he that hath sown unto the flesh did at last reap eternal life, then would he gather that

which he had not sown! He would mock God! All things considered, we believe that the general bearing of Paul's teaching on this matter is contrary rather than favourable to universalism.

We know that the doctrine of eternal punishment rests upon several striking passages of the Synoptics and of the Apocalypse; but we doubt whether any other system has succeeded in explaining them in such a manner as to leave no uncertainty whatever in the minds of impartial seekers after the truth. But we remind our readers that the present object of our research is essentially Paul's teaching on this subject. Now we state a most dominant fact; namely, that Paul, in the many passages bearing upon the destiny of the wicked (twenty-five in number), constantly employs one or the other of the terms we have indicated, and which are all suggestive of the idea of destruction. Once or twice he speaks of tribulation and suffering, but he never adds that these sorrows shall be without end.

True, it is easy to understand that, from the point of view of traditional dogma, the condition of the damned in hell, deprived of all which makes existence desirable or endurable, may well be called death. But what seems more difficult to admit is that an author whose main idea is that of endless

torment, and whose purpose is to inculcate it in the minds of his readers, should never once employ either an expression or an image calculated to convince them fully of its truth, but should everywhere speak of death, perdition, destruction, &c. Let us take in the full meaning of expressions such as we have before quoted: "God shall destroy him"; "their end is perdition"; "he shall reap of the flesh corruption" (having attached himself to perishable things, he himself shall be perishable likewise). Do we not feel that, were it not for the philosophical prejudice in favour of the inalienable immortality of the soul, the literal interpretation of these passages would of necessity impose itself upon every serious mind. But we have seen that, according to St. Paul, God alone possesses immortality, that man is called to seek it by the practice of good, that the resurrection for eternal life proceeds from Jesus Christ, and is promised only to those that are in Jesus Christ, so that the objection becomes transformed into an argument. Alone the hypothesis of the final annihilation of the unrighteous is in harmony with these philosophical premises. Finally, we have seen that it accepts and leaves fully unimpaired those sublime promises of a final and complete triumph of right upon which universalists base their theories.

We know of only one passage throughout Paul's epistles in which are to be found certain expressions which may appear more favourable to the hypothesis of eternal woe than to any other; as it is of capital importance in the subject before us, we must quote it at full length:—

“It is a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you; and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power, in flaming fire rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints,” &c. (2 Thess. i. 6-10).

Here, as in every other occasion, the punishment of the wicked is called ruin or destruction (*ὄλεθρος*). But, some will observe, it is an *eternal* destruction. What does this expression signify? Does it denote a ruin which lengthens out from eternity to eternity, and, consequently, a destruction which never destroys? It seems more natural to consider it as a final ruin after which there can be no possible restoration. The last judgment is styled (Heb. vi. 2) an eternal judgment, which

evidently does not signify that the judgment in itself shall be indefinitely prolonged, but that its consequences shall be eternal.* Such also is the significance of the ruin of which Paul speaks.

We may observe, further, that in the above-quoted passage, the punishment of the ungodly is termed affliction, as well as ruin, or destruction. This assuredly is proof enough that the annihilation of the wicked shall be neither immediate nor exempt from anguish, and that they shall suffer before their death and in their death. But this is the view taken of the subject by the partisans of conditional immortality.

Lastly, some will say, we are told that the punishment of the unrighteous shall be eternal destruction "from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might." This privation is part of their punishment; that they may feel it, must they not continue to exist? This consideration cannot be regarded as conclusive.† But we do not think

* It is in the same sense that redemption is called eternal (Heb. ix. 12). The famous passage, "These shall go away into eternal punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46), which, for many, is sufficient of itself to settle the question, may be similarly interpreted. A punishment which ends in the destruction of a being destined to immortality, is indeed an eternal punishment. For its effects subsist for ever, although they may not be felt and suffered throughout all eternity.

† It might be said also of the victims of the second death, that they are deprived of the heavenly blessings which they might have enjoyed.

it necessary to enter upon its discussion, for it appears to us to be based upon an error of translation. In our opinion the expression “ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ κυρίου καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ” probably signifies, not “Far from the face of the Lord,” &c., but “From, or because, of the presence of the Lord, and of the power of his might.” Paul here says of the wicked what later on he will say of their chief, the antichrist: “The Lord Jesus shall slay him with the breath of his mouth, and bring him to naught by the manifestation of his coming” (2 Thess. ii. 8). The following are our reasons:—

(1.) The attribute of the Lord which Paul here brings forward is power. That is not what makes of communion with Him a source of delight for the righteous. (2.) Declared enemies of Jesus Christ are those in question here. We cannot easily explain how the privation of His presence could suddenly become so cruel a punishment for beings that entertain such dispositions towards Him. But we can readily understand that His terrible apparition should strike them with sudden awe; now that is what we precisely understand Paul to say.

In reality, what does the debate bear upon? Upon the precise significance of words such as *θάνατος*, *φθορά*, *ἀπόλεια*, *ἔλεθρος*, in their application to the destiny of the ungodly. Now there are

other passages in which the meaning of these same terms cannot be called into question for a single moment. Thus Paul says, speaking of the consequences of the negation of the resurrection: "Then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (or are lost, ἀπώλοντο). By this the Apostle does not certainly mean that they are suffering in hell for ever, but that they shall not live again, that they have disappeared, that they are annihilated.* Why, when the same expressions are used in connection with the future of the wicked, should they be invested with an utterly different signification, which no declaration of the Apostle in any way justifies?

We believe it, therefore, probable that the doctrine of conditional immortality is the most correct expression of Paul's ideas on the momentous and painful subject we are treating in this paper. Does this imply that we consider this dogma as sufficiently demonstrated? This were reaching beyond the exact truth. We must renew the reserve we have already made concerning a certain number of passages from the Synoptics and the Apocalypse, whose interpretation presents, to say the least,

* We have seen that Paul attaches importance, or reality, to the survival of the soul only in so far as it is concerned in the fact of the resurrection.

many serious difficulties for the partisans of conditional immortality. As regards Paul himself, we cannot agree with the theologians of that school who affirm that the great Apostle taught the doctrine dear to their hearts "in the most precise and accurate terms which human language could supply." Our impression is different, and even contrary to theirs; it seems as though in the Holy Scriptures God has not seen fit to give us the elements of any precise theory, raised above all contestation, upon the weighty question we are studying, and that it enters into His purpose to allow the future of the impenitent soul to remain enveloped in the mystery of an inexpressible and infinite terror.

On this subject we shall make one more observation. From the point of view of conditional immortality, annihilation is no doubt a punishment, and a capital punishment for a being destined to immortality; * but, on the other hand, for the man whose existence, after the judgment which has condemned him, is to be one of endless sorrow and anguish, annihilation is also and especially a deliverance. In this case we must say, with one of the theologians of whom we speak: † "God in

* The advocates of this doctrine verily believe in a real hell.

† The Rev. Samuel Cox, D.D.

His mercy grants this boon of annihilation to those who have obstinately refused to receive a greater benefit at His hands." - This thought may appear most plausible, but it is foreign both to the letter and to the spirit of Paul's teaching. He never presents the *ἀπόλεια* otherwise than as a pure chastisement. He never says anything which might tend to reassure the wicked as to the extent of the consequences of his impenitence. This fact is calculated to enlighten and direct the Christian theologian as to the manner in which he should interpret the theory of conditional immortality, supposing him to be convinced that it is verily biblical.

ARTICLE XIII.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM LANDELS, D.D.

IN the papers that have appeared, answers have been given to this question by writers of four different types, of whom the following may be named as representative men, without any estimate being pronounced or implied as to the merits of those who are mentioned and those who are not :—

1. The Rev. Stopford Brooke, M.A., who goes far beyond the question, and not only affirms the possibility of salvation in the case of some, but the certain final salvation of every member of the human race ;

2. The Rev. Edward White, who pronounces at once against universal restoration, and in favour of an offer of salvation being made after death to those to whom that offer has not been presented during the present life ;

3. The Rev. Dr. Littledale, who, without giving an affirmative answer to the question discussed, shows a leaning towards universal restoration, and, on the principle that the greater includes the less, to the theory of probation after death ;

4. The Rev. Principal Cairns, who, writing with the reverence for Scripture which characterises all his investigations and utterances, does not see any ground for entertaining this pleasing hope.

Such varied utterances on such a subject by men of learning and ability, who, in so far as they appeal to Scripture, may be supposed to have approached it without prejudice, can hardly fail to leave on a candid mind, the impression that the teaching of Scripture on the subject must, to say the least, be somewhat obscure; and this suggests the inquiry whether this be not a purposed obscurity? whether in raising the question, therefore, we are not proceeding on wrong lines, and attempting to solve that which God has purposely left insoluble? That there is reason for this supposed obscurity may yet be shown; meanwhile it may be well to point out wherein the arguments of the different writers appear to fail in establishing the positions taken.

Owing to the limits of this paper this can only be done in very brief and imperfect manner. As the field to be surveyed embraces so many different theories, it is impossible to do more than take a cursory glance at the arguments on which their advocates mainly rely.

It is admitted in this paper that all argument

on the question must be founded, as Dr. Cairns premises, on the teaching of God's Word. Speculation is peculiarly out of place. Human instincts are not to be trusted, because human instincts are not unerring even on matters which come within our ken, and on this matter we are not cognisant of all the elements which might influence our conclusions. It is further recognised that salvation is of grace—that God is sovereign in dispensing His favours, and that we have no right from what He does for one man, to argue that that or its equivalent He is bound to do for another. *A priori* conclusions therefore are of no authority. What God has in store for Gospel hearers who die in impenitence can only be learned from God's own Word.

This much being premised the way is open for estimating, so far as they can be glanced at within such brief limits, the theories discussed and the leading arguments urged in their support.

The universal restoration theory favoured by Dr. Littledale and boldly presented in the last paper, by the Rev. Stopford Brooke, M.A., may be noticed first. On reading this paper one is struck with the certainty, the outspokenness, one would almost say the dogmatism, with which the writer affirms the final salvation of all men, as

compared with the hesitating, conjectural tone of several of the other writers, and would be glad, if it could be done with a due regard to the teaching of the Word of God, to embrace so pleasing a theory so confidently affirmed. But unhappily one is equally struck with the fact that the writer's certainty is owing to his disregard for the difficulties with which the subject is beset. He ignores altogether the teaching of Scripture, insomuch that he neither attempts to explain those texts which militate against his theory on the one hand, nor to find a Scripture foundation for it on the other. He first appears to draw his conclusions from his conception of the Divine character, affirming that *this must* and *that cannot* be, without regard to the fact that some who believe as much as he does in the infinitude of the Divine perfections arrive at a quite different conclusion; afterwards he leaves us in doubt whether he is a theist or a pantheist, now reasoning as if theism were his creed, then revealing his belief in a pantheistic philosophy which does away with individual freedom and responsibility, and consequently with moral evil, recognises neither sin nor salvation in the accepted sense of the words, and uses them in a sense which, if no explanation of them were given, would only serve to mislead.

It is not denied here that the Divine attributes, the infinite power, and wisdom, and justice, and holiness, and goodness of God may be made the data of an argument on this question, provided we are sure that we rightly apprehend their significance and their power, but only that our inferences are authoritative when they are at variance with the Word of God. If the writer wished to carry us with him, it behoved him to show how his conclusions can be made to harmonise with its statements. Instead of doing this, he gives plain enough intimation that with him Scripture is not the final authority. Of the annihilation of the wicked he says, "There is a good deal of proof that this may have been the view of the writers of some of the epistles," and after making this admission, he proceeds to discard the theory as if it were not worthy of consideration. Moreover, towards the close of his paper, he speaks of Paul, when the Pauline teaching does not accord with his view, as having been "led astray by the understanding." In this way he quietly disregards the testimony of Scripture, so that as between him and those to whom it is the final authority, there is no basis on which argument is possible.

A considerable demand is made on our faith when we are thus expected to set aside the autho-

rity of the inspired writers for the dictum of a merely human teacher, however gifted and wise. And the demand is felt not to be less startling when we turn to examine the arguments by which he arrives at his conclusion. His argument from the Divine attributes overlooks the true nature of mind, and assumes that God's omnipotence can deal with that as with matter, moulding it to His will irrespectively of the freewill of the creature. For though the end is not to be accomplished by a direct exercise of power, but by an educational process, it is assumed that an Omnipotent Educator cannot fail even in dealing with a creature whom He has created free, and whose goodness must be the result of its own voluntary choice. The legitimate issue of this assumption is to divest sin of all moral wrong, and reduce it to a necessary stage in the development of goodness. The Divine wisdom and goodness, it is argued, would be impugned did God allow the evil which, being omnipotent, He is able to destroy. And as on the same principle His wisdom and goodness would be impugned by His suffering to come into existence any evil which He had the power to prevent, it follows that having been allowed by a perfect Being who had the power to prevent it, we are mistaken in regarding sin as an evil, or other than as a part of the process through

which humanity passes on its way to what is good and true. Consistently with this, he is not prepared to say that sin is an evil:—"How do I know whether evil has any existence at all in the universe other than a relative existence? It may be no more *actual* than matter is by many supposed to be. Indeed, that seems to stand to reason if God be absolute." And further on he becomes still more decidedly pantheistic, and makes sin appear to be not so much a stage in human development even, as in the outflow and manifestation of the Divine. Thus there being no place for sin in his theological system, neither is there any need for salvation. And differing so widely, both as to the authority to which we must appeal, and to the meaning of the terms we employ, any further dealing with his argument would be only a waste of words.

Our dissatisfaction with his argument is not diminished but increased by the manner in which he represents and denounces the generally received, or, as Dr. Littledale calls it, the severe view. He speaks of "the immortal torture which God, in order to prove His goodness to the universe, is supposed by those who cling to the third view to inflict upon the myriads of men, women, and children whom His Omnipotent love was impotent

to save from the eternal grasp of hate." Further on, expatiating on the view, he says, "To punish sixty years of sin by infinite pain is an injustice to which the worst of earthly tyrants must not stoop; and to punish sin by binding on men the doom of everlasting continuance in sin is so intolerably absurd now, that the author of such a law would be held on earth to be unfit to exercise justice over the meanest of mankind." The theory, as he represents it, he denounces in no measured terms—"This noble conception, both of humanity and God, directly derived from heathenism and savagery, from imperial theories and aristocracies, from all the barbarisms, was reserved for modern Protestantism to adopt, and has been in our days the fruitful parent of the greater part of the silent or violent atheism in this country and in Europe. Argument is useless against it, and it is waste of time and of intelligence to discuss it. The proper way to meet it is to call it what it is—an intolerable and abominable lie, an opinion of darkness and death, and to repeat again and again, without any argument whatever, this determined and indignant denial."

When such strong language is employed, it becomes necessary to state that there are not a few who now believe that salvation is not possible after

the period of probation terminates, and that it does terminate sooner or later, who would not subscribe to his representation, and that they regard some of its features with as much horror as he possibly can. He must know that many who are not inferior to himself in mental and moral qualities, feel compelled to believe in eternal suffering, not as the punishment of sixty years of sin, but as the accompaniment of eternal sin, which sin is not the result of God "binding on men the doom of everlasting continuance in sin," but of the sinners' voluntary choice. Neither does their belief imply any low conception of the Divine character, nor a denial that God will save every salvable being, but because it takes into account the freedom of the human will, it recognises the possibility of men reaching a state in which their salvation becomes impossible, so that their eternal existence must mean their eternal misery. This view may not commend itself to his acceptance. He may not be satisfied with the evidence on which it rests. But it does not deserve to be called either "savage" or "barbarous," or denounced as "an intolerable and abominable lie, an opinion of darkness and death."

In Dr. Littledale, whose paper favours universal restoration, without distinctly avowing his belief in it, we have to deal with a writer of a very different

stamp. He is as calm as the other is impassioned, as uncertain as the other is oracular. Leaning towards Universalism, and starting with an argument of which that is the logical outcome, he yet stops short of its legitimate conclusion, and contents himself with the narrower belief that salvation after death is not impossible. The evidence he adduces in support of his belief, either proves nothing or it proves too much; and while we are constrained to respect the candour with which he looks at arguments *pro* or *con*, we feel nevertheless that there is a strange failure to estimate precisely the value of some which he employs—a fact greatly to be deprecated in the discussion of such a momentous theme—and rise from his paper with the conviction that he has not been able to produce any Scripture in which his theory finds adequate support.

After stating that the sterner or orthodox view is not supported by any “dogmatic decree of the universal Church, nor embodied in any of the creeds”—that even in Protestant Confessions it has not firmly held its ground; and further that “there is no decision of the whole Christian Church adverse to the notion of salvability after death,” or even to Universalism—statements that can have little weight with those who do not recognise such courts of appeal, but believe in the Bible as a

whole and exclusively, as the basis of Protestant faith—he comes to deal with the teaching of Scripture on the question.

And here the evidence he adduces is not only meagre in the extreme, but a large proportion of it is neutralised because of his shrinking from the consequence to which his own argument, if sound, would necessarily lead. Thus, while admitting that “the awful solemnity of the language of Scripture on sin, death, and judgment to come cannot be exaggerated,” and that none of “the contributors to this discussion” have “overstated the case on this side,” he “thinks them chargeable with having failed to take account of another body of Scripture doctrine, suggesting the ‘restitution of all things,’ and the disappearance of evil from the universe.” Three texts are instanced as being of this nature—John iii. 17; Rom. v. 15; John x. 10. Of the three texts thus quoted only one can be said to have the slightest bearing on the subject. The third is confined exclusively to those whom the Saviour calls His sheep, and sheds no light whatever on the destiny of others. The second is equally silent as to their destiny except on the hypothesis that the loss of any soul implies the exhaustion of Divine grace, and is not owing to the sinner’s determined rejection of all the over-

tures which grace can make ; and as this is not the hypothesis on which Universalism is rejected, the text does not really touch the point at issue. There remains therefore only the first. And it is now admitted, that as that testifies plainly that the purpose of the Saviour's mission was the salvation of the world, and is not alone in the testimony which it bears, it may fairly be made the basis of an argument. It will be seen, however, that the argument founded on it, if it proves anything, proves more than the writer is prepared to accept—not only that the salvation of some men after death is possible, but that the final salvation of all men is certain. This indeed is recognised when it is quoted as “suggesting the ‘restitution of all things,’ and the disappearance of evil from the universe.” Unless it proves this, it proves nothing to the point.

Does it prove this ? The argument is that since Christ came to save the world, His mission must have failed of its purpose if it be true “that He was unable to save more than an infinitesimal minority of its inhabitants.” In reply to this, it may fairly be said that it is difficult to see how the question of numbers can make any difference. It may affect the degree of failure, but not the fact ; and degrees cannot much influence our conclusion when Omnipotence is in question. The failure is as real,

whether the number of the lost be great or small. The larger number may impress us more; but it does not present a greater difficulty to our faith. Indeed, there seems reason for affirming that the smaller the number of the lost the greater the difficulty; for how can the power which has saved the vast majority be conceived of as failing in the case of an infinitesimal minority? "The simplest and most reasonable mode," therefore, "of reconciling the antithesis, is not," as he suggests, "to postulate salvability after death," but to postulate universal restoration. And it is just because he shrinks from this that the argument breaks down in his hands. No more direct contradiction of what goes before can be imagined than is supplied in the very same paragraph in which this argument occurs, when after the intermediate state between death and judgment is supposed to be utilised "for the gradual fitting of souls to enter on a higher life," there occurs this strange admission—"*it is conceivable, of course, that certain souls might harden themselves permanently and implacably.*" By this admission the whole preceding argument founded on the purpose of Christ's mission is swept away. If that argument does not prove universal restoration, it throws no light whatever on the question of salvation after death. It is only

by its establishing the wider thesis that it can be made to support the narrower.

The argument from the purpose of the Saviour's mission, is not the only one invalidated by the admission above quoted. Several others are thus set aside because, we presume, while willing to accept their support for "salvability after death," he is unprepared to accept the wider issue. Such is the fate of the argument in which, comparing the present life and the interval between death and judgment to an educational course, he says, "God proves men, or tries them, not to discover whether they have any good in them, but to develop what is good and to remove what is evil . . . and as there is some possibility of good in the worst sinner, as possibilities of evil in the highest saint, the reasonable inference is that God will no more allow the good to be overpowered and destroyed by the evil, than a skilful worker in metals would throw away the gold which he finds mingled with some base alloy." This is, without doubt, universalism pure and simple. And yet, instead of accepting and abiding by it, he finds in the analogue "a sorrowful residuum," "who have learnt nothing but evil in their schoolboy days, and have used their faculties only to plunge ever deeper into wickedness;" and admits that there is great peril—"greater than

we have the means of adequately estimating"—
“in neglecting our school-time in this world, in
abusing our opportunities, in presenting ourselves
not merely unprepared, but actively unfitted to
enter on a new and higher stage of existence” . . .
“yielding to the temptation of neglect, whose
penalty may be so tremendous.”

These closing sentences are true. But they nevertheless show how much precision of argument is lacking, and how needless it is to examine minutely arguments which are thus disposed of by the admissions of their author. It is enough to note that the sheet-anchor of his unavowed universalism is the purpose of the Saviour's mission; and that the argument from this derives all its apparent force from an assumption which is untenable, that Omnipotence can deal with mind as with matter. This assumption has already been referred to in connection with Mr. Stopford Brooke's paper, and what is said there need not be here repeated; nor need we add more than this—that the taunt directed against the popular theology, to wit, that according to its hypotheses, the Almighty has sustained what “on any earthly analogy we can frame would mean crushing defeat,”—is equally applicable to all resistance of the Divine will, and falls powerless before the words of our Lord, and others that harmonise

with them, when over the doomed city of Jerusalem He exclaims—"How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Righteousness may be defeated, for righteousness is a moral force, and moral forces may be resisted by creatures whose wills are free. Love may be defeated also for the same reason. But their defeat is no disparagement to either. It may only be the occasion of their more illustrious display. But Omnipotence is not, and cannot be defeated. In the punishment of the impenitent as well as in the deliverance of the believer, it does all that it is within the province of mere power to do. A sovereign is not defeated when the law is violated and his overtures rejected, unless anarchy is allowed to overrun his dominions, because he is impotent to punish and restrain the rebels. The prison is as much an indication of the dominion he exercises as is the uniform of his army, or the obedience rendered to his royal proclamation. And the confinement of the impenitent to the outer darkness, which is the penal region or prison-house of the universe, is as sure a sign of Christ's conquering might as is the homage He receives from the heavenly hosts. In accordance with this, the servant of the Lord in Isaiah is represented as

saying, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord."

Before parting from this subject, surprise may be expressed that neither of the writers whose arguments have been passed in review, take any notice of the Scriptures that are most directly at variance with the theory they favour. Mr. Stopford Brooke, indeed, shows so little regard for the authority of Scripture generally, that his silence is less surprising. But Dr. Littledale's reverence for Scripture, and the appeals he makes to it, are enough to justify the expectation that he would not pass by such texts as that in which, in view of the betrayal and its consequences, our Lord says of Judas, "Good were it for that man if he had never been born" (Mark xv. 21); or that in which He speaks of the sin for which "there is no forgiveness, either in this world or that which is to come;" or that in which Peter asks, "What shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of Christ?" or that in which Paul says, "Whose end is destruction." These and others of a similar import, apart from the texts which speak of the eternity of suffering, and which at least are not at variance with these, appear to teach, as plainly as words can, the awful truth to which the Universalist theory is directly opposed, that some men are finally and

irretrievably lost. If after temporary suffering Judas were to be raised to an eternity of blessedness, it could hardly be said of him that he had better never been born. If there be one sin for which there is absolutely no forgiveness, and some men are guilty of that sin, it does not seem possible that all men can be finally saved. If there be some men whose end is destruction, as Peter's question implies, and Paul expressly affirms, how can it be believed that their destruction is to be followed by salvation? If destruction be the end, there can be nothing beyond. All the steps in their course tend to destruction and find their final issue there. This is the ultimate result, the final goal. How can there be any recovery, or release, or final restoration if destruction be the end?

Dr. Littledale's arguments, as previously observed, although they favour Universalism, are not used for that purpose, but to justify him in postulating "salvability after death." In this, although less careful to limit his postulate to a given class, he is at one with the Rev. Edward White, to some of whose arguments he refers with approval; and it is now time that this narrower question should be considered.

The writer has already hinted his belief that the Scriptures gives no clear, positive utterance on the

subject; and to him there appears to be good reason why they should not. It does not seem possible that God, without abdicating His sovereignty, can encourage His creatures to continue in rebellion for a single hour. As Mr. White justly remarks, "Christ insists everywhere on immediate repentance; on a man's turning from his sins at the first warning of judgment to come; on his closing with the mercy of God without delay." This being so, the question arises, How can we conceive of such a peremptory demand being accompanied by the intimation, given, either directly or by implication in statements which justify the inference, that those who reject mercy and refuse to submit to the Divine authority may have an opportunity of repenting of their refusal, and escaping its consequences in the world to come? Would not such an intimation frustrate the Lord's purpose by encouraging sinners to postpone compliance with His demands? And is it not probable, therefore, yea, almost certain, that nothing of the kind will be found in the Word of God?

And does not the same consideration bear, although, perhaps, with somewhat mitigated force, against the probability of Scripture containing any intimation that probation or the possibility of salvation terminates at death? Such intimation

would furnish ground for the inference that probation did not terminate before death, and that up to the moment of death salvation continued to be possible. Such indeed is the teaching at this day of the evangelical Churches. And is there not something in this also that is fitted to encourage delay? Has it not actually the effect of encouraging delay in numberless instances? Are not many Gospel hearers who postpone their acceptance of salvation actuated by the secret hope that death will not come upon them with such surprising suddenness as to leave them without opportunity for repentance? And is it not their intention to repent before all chance is gone? They see that comparatively few of their neighbours die without some premonitions; and influenced by the law of averages, they presume on receiving some premonitions themselves; and hence say, in reference to the great matter of their salvation, "Time enough yet." That the case of any living man should be regarded as hopeless is not pleaded for here, because no man can so read the secrets of the human soul as to know certainly what exists or what is taking place there. But neither, on the other hand, does it seem likely that God will send a message to men requiring their immediate acceptance of His salvation, and accompany it with the

intimation that they are safe enough if they only attend to it before death, although that may not take place until fifty years hence.

It is admitted that these *a priori* conclusions would have no weight if found to be at variance with fact. It is contended, however, that there is nothing in Scripture to countenance in men the presumption that they may safely pursue an impenitent course up to within an hour of their death, however favourable their opportunities then may be, so that after death they will have a chance of escaping its consequences ; and that, on the other hand, while it is plainly intimated that the probationary period must soon terminate, there is not a little to justify the belief that the cause of its termination is not death but character ; not what happens to the man, but what he does and is. Its termination, in many instances, there seems reason to believe, is the result of a deteriorating, hardening process which renders the man unsalvable. Nothing remains in his nature of which the Divine Spirit can lay hold. He is the wayside hearer in whom the good seed of the Word lights on no soil in which it can germinate. As regards its susceptibility to religious impressions, his heart is "hard and stony as the trodden way." With the strengthening of evil habits until he has become powerless to resist

them, there has been the weakening of desire for any change in his condition, until in his sluggish nature all desire has been extinguished except the desire to be let alone. With others, like the Jews in our Lord's time, the conditions of salvation are so repugnant that they deliberately and determinedly reject them. Not so much by a gradual process like that described do they become unsalvable, but by more suddenly rousing themselves to a supreme and final act of resistance, determining that come what may they will not accept of salvation on God's terms. In spite of all the means used and all the influences exerted, in spite of their conviction of the Saviour's claims, they assume an attitude which renders their salvation impossible alike in this world and the next, deliberately making up their minds to be damned rather than submit to His requirements. In these and other ways may men reach a point at which they cease to be salvable. And although it does not become any one to say of another that he has reached this state, seeing no one can thus accurately judge another's character, and even in those who appear to us the worst there may be latent feelings which new influences will call into play, there seems little reason to doubt that there are many living men of whom this is true. Such appears to us to be the teaching of those Scriptures

in which our Lord speaks of the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness either in this world or in that which is to come ; of those in which men who have not, are said to have taken from them even that which they have ; of men who blind their eyes, and close their ears, and harden their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and be converted and healed ; of those from whose eyes the things which belonged to their peace were hid even in their day of visitation. The same thing appears to be taught in those Scriptures also in which Paul speaks of the Gospel being hid to living men who are lost, whom the God of this world has blinded against the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ ; and says of his countrymen, " Seeing ye put the Word of God away from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." These and similar Scriptures, instead of teaching that probation lasts till death, seem to intimate plainly that there may be living men who are no longer in a salvable state. It is time, however, to turn to the arguments of those who take a different view, especially those who affirm the possibility of salvation after death.

Mr. White, who speaks as strongly as any one can

against the notion of salvation being offered after death to those who have rejected the Gospel here, thinks it possible in the case of heathen nations and of children dying in infancy. Even when thus limited, it does not seem evident to us that the question can be affirmatively answered.

To affirm the salvation of infants after death seems to us to imply that a new meaning is attached to salvation, or that the condition of infants is assumed to be what it is not. When we ask, What are those who die in infancy to be saved from? it is difficult to obtain any satisfactory answer. Their present condition is a safe condition. Our Lord's words, "Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven;" "Suffer them to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven," show that they are already in the state into which men are brought by their conversion, as safe, therefore, as converted men are. They belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, and are fit to enter heaven. And whatever change may take place on their entering, whatever development of spiritual life, their case can throw no light on the destiny of those who are excluded from heaven; morally, because of their character; legally, because of their exposure to the curse of a violated law.

The case of the heathen is equally inconclusive. Without pronouncing on their destiny as such—without supposing that they will be condemned for rejecting a salvation which has never been proffered to them, various questions which we have no means of answering, require to be answered, before we can find any data on which to found an argument. It must be borne in mind that although they have no written revelation, they have sufficient knowledge of what is right to make them responsible for their wrongdoing. “These having not the law, are a law unto themselves.” By that law they are to be judged. And who can tell but that in the eyes of the All-seeing One their action in reference to that law has already determined their destiny? that the part they have already acted indicates that their acceptance of salvation, under any conditions, is hopeless, and the proffer of salvation, therefore, superfluous, and that thus, “having sinned without law, they also perish without law”?

On the other hand, on the hypothesis of their having acted rightly according to the light they have—of which their character, it must be confessed, does not admit of our cherishing much hope—has not their probation already issued in their acceptance with God? Are they not already in that state of which Peter speaks—“Of a truth, I

perceive that in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him"? This does not mean that they are to be saved apart from the death of Christ, for the effects of His death may extend far beyond the limits within which He is known. And although it may be thought that dying while their characters are so faulty and imperfect, they are not very fit for the society of heaven, that is no more than may be said of many believers of the Gospel of whose salvation we have no question, so that probation after death on that account is no more to be predicated of the one than the other. Development there may be in both cases—development there must be. But development does not necessarily mean continued probation. Even the purgatory of the Romanist is meant to purify men, not to prove what they are. Salvation even according to it, as one writer in this discussion remarks, is not initiated, but only continued in the other world.

And if the case of infants and heathens sheds little light on the question, not much more is to be derived from the Scriptures generally appealed to. Mr. White lays stress on a sentence in Paul's sermon at Athens—"The times of this ignorance God winked at, but now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent." But surely that does not

necessarily mean more than that God judges Gospel hearers by a higher standard than heathens, and that conduct which is excused in the one cannot be tolerated in the other. Dr. Littledale refers to the judgment of the quick *and dead*, and lays stress on the interval which, in the case of the dead, elapses between death and the day of final judgment. As, according to the "severer" view, "each former human being would have been separately tried and sentenced at the time of his bodily death, there would be no motive in summoning the saint from his place in Paradise or heaven, the sinner from his place in Gehenna, merely to go through the form of being remitted thither again." Such motive he finds "in the utilising the intermediate time between death and judgment for the gradual fitting of souls to enter on a higher life." In reply to which it is only necessary to remark, that as the judgment extends to the righteous dead as well as the wicked, and as the supposed motive cannot exist in the case of the former, neither can it be shown to be necessary in the case of the latter. It is strange that what is so obvious should be overlooked in an argument from the passage.

A similar unaccountable oversight occurs in his reference to the sheep and goats in Matt. xxv., in which he quotes with approval what he calls "a

very pregnant remark," whose source he has forgotten, to the effect that "goats, however inferior in value to sheep, are at least next to them in an Eastern shepherd's estimate of his wealth." In this way he attaches importance to a figure, although there stands opposed to the suggestion the awful fact that the sentence pronounced on the goats is, "Depart from Me, ye cursed." It is surely permissible to enter a protest against such loose and careless treatment of Scripture in dealing with this awful question.

Both Dr. Littledale and Mr. White, in common with those who hold the same view, rest their case mainly on 1 Peter iii. 19, as connected with chapter iv. 6. The text is interpreted by Dean Alford as teaching that Christ actually went in His disembodied state and preached the Gospel in Hades to the souls mentioned in the text. Great weight is no doubt to be attached to the views of such a judicious expositor, and many who agree with him. But expositors equally judicious take an opposite view, such as the late Rev. Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh, who enters more thoroughly into the investigation of the passage than do most, and simply from its careful, critical examination, is compelled to arrive at the conclusion that it teaches nothing as to Christ's preaching to souls in the intermediate

state, but only testifies to the spiritual power with which, after the resurrection, the Gospel was preached to souls imprisoned or held captive under the power of sin. But whether this be the correct interpretation or not, and whatever view may be taken of the meaning and purpose of the preaching to the imprisoned spirits, it is important to observe that no intimation is given here, or in any other part of Scripture, that the preaching has been followed in the case of even one disembodied spirit by any salutary result. The Scripture is silent as to their accepting the offer of mercy, and being released from prison in consequence. And in this silence do we find not contradiction, but rather confirmation of the view herein propounded—that it is not death but character which determines destiny.

This view consists with the endorsement of nearly all that Dr. Cairns has advanced, and differs from him only on one point—his assumption that destiny is fixed at death, and not till then. It recognises, as he does, the existence of a day of grace, and the close of that day, after which salvation ceases to be possible. It gives weight, no less than he does, to the Scriptures in which this is taught, and urges the momentous importance that this day of visitation should not be neglected. It

recognises also a day of final judgment, when the two classes are separated for ever. It is only on the question, when does this day of visitation close, and what closes it—death or character—that it joins issue with him. It does not regard his position on this question as established by the Scriptures he quotes. Some of these are obviously as consistent with the one hypothesis as the other. And if there be two or three which are commonly understood to point to death rather than character, their testimony, on examination, is not found to be conclusive. Of this nature is the Parable of the Ten Virgins, on which it may suffice to remark, that it speaks not of wickedness, but of folly, and cannot be clearly shown to teach more than this, that *they* miss coveted and exalted privileges by whom opportunity is foolishly neglected. The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus testifies more forcibly to the irrevocableness of doom; but not more clearly to what it is by which doom is fixed. For it is to be noticed:—(1.) That there is a difficulty in fitting into any theory of the future life all the details of the story. (2.) That it is evidently meant to condemn self-indulgence in disregard of the wants and woes of others, and to enforce the exhortation, “Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.” (3.)

That the mention of the great gulf is not in reply to a request from the rich man to be allowed to enter Paradise, but that Lazarus may be sent to minister to his relief in the place of torment. (4.) That if the gulf is to be understood as preventing the former as much as the latter, the question is still open whether it be by death or character that the gulf is fixed. (5.) That it is not a case—nor is any such case mentioned in any other part of Scripture—of penitents seeking pardon, and being denied it because it is too late. The rich man is not a penitent whose penitence is too late to avail, but a selfish man who has lavishly gratified himself in disregard of a brother's misery, seeking to have his wretchedness mitigated by that brother's services and at that brother's cost. This readiness to seek the smallest favour from that brother shows the abject wretchedness of the once proud voluptuary. That wretchedness is keenly felt, and its mitigation eagerly sought. But there is no sign that he repents of the course which led to it. He does not even acknowledge the justice of the infliction. But on the contrary, the request he makes for his brethren implies a reflection on the Divine dealings with himself, to the effect that if more had been done for him as he suggests should be done for them, he would not have come to that place of

torment. (6.) That if his conversation with Abraham, "Nay, Father Abraham; but if one went unto them from the dead they would repent," implies his belief that the case of his brethren was not so hopeless as his own; the correction of that belief is supplied by Abraham's answer, which intimates plainly that with those who resist the light they have, all further means such as he suggests would avail nothing, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." (7.) That the gulf which separates the two classes, whatever it may be, prevents all transition from either to the other; and as it is not supposed to be any physical chasm which disembodied spirits cannot cross, neither is there reason to regard it as a Divine decree which prevents the transition irrespective of any hypothetical change of character. The righteous are not to be understood as kept in their seats of bliss, by Divine decree, however much their character may change; and why should the wicked be regarded as confined to the place of woe, by Divine decree, however much their character may change? Is it not rather that the character of the righteous prevents their falling into Gehenna, and the character of the wicked prevents their rising into Paradise? If so, the parable rather confirms than

discountenances the belief that it is not death but character which fixes destiny. The passage in Revelation xxii. 11 is consistent with either view, and need not be referred to now but for the purpose of saying, that the impressive quotation which Dr. Cairns makes from Canon Boyd Carpenter is more favourable to our view than to his,—“Is it not the declaration of the ever terrible truth that men are building up their destiny by the actions and habits of their lives? ‘Sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny.’ The righteous become righteous, the godly become godly; so slowly but surely may the power of being masters of our fate slip out of our hands. It is in this law of our nature that the key to many of the darkest problems of the future may lie; and not without a solemn declaration of this law does the Book of Revelation close.”

These words present more forcibly than he is capable of, the view as to character fixing destiny which the present writer holds. Of this view, it may be said in conclusion, that it has a most important bearing on several points which come up in this discussion. It involves no harshness or unkindness on the part of the Divine Being, such as is attributed in popular representation, when, though the great sinner may be forgiven who re-

pents just a moment before death, the lesser sinner cannot be forgiven because he is just a moment too late. It encourages in the sinner no presumptuous delay, but enforces the immediate acceptance of the Gospel on all to whom it is proclaimed. It appeals forcibly to the sinner's conscience and compels his acknowledgment of the rectitude of the Divine claims. It is in harmony with the lamentations which God utters over the final doom of the impenitent, and His declared desire to save—"How shall I give thee up, Ephraim!" "O Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

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