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Title: Love's Final Victory

Author: Horatio

Release date: February 1, 2006 [EBook #9969]

Most recently updated: December 27, 2020

Language: English

*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LOVE'S FINAL VICTORY ***

Produced by Juliet Sutherland, Charlie Kirschner and the

Online Distributed Proofreading Team.

LOVE'S FINAL VICTORY

Ultimate Universal Salvation on the Basis of Scripture and Reason

BY

HORATIO

An Orthodox Minister

"That which is incredible to thee thou shalt not, at thy soul's peril, attempt to believe. Go to Perdition if thou must, but not with a lie in thy mouth. By the Eternal Maker, no."—Carlyle.

"Is not Universal Salvation the Divine Corollary of Universal Atonement?"—Extract of a letter from the Author to an eminent Methodist minister in England.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.

DIFFERENT THEORIES.

Fear of Punishment—Early Impressions—Men of Piety and Learning—Facts and Figures—Mental or Material Fire—The Theory of Conditional Immortality—Why Invented—Moody—Divine Failure Impossible—Future Operations of Grace—Restoration—A Plea for Charity—Other Worlds—The Heathen—Devout Use of the Imagination.

II.

CRUELTY OF FORMER VIEWS.

Unconditional Election—Children of Believing Parents—An Arrogant Pretension—God's Own Children—The Heathen of All Time—A Baleful Shadow—Former Cruelty—Herbert Spencer—Dr. Farrar's Eternal Hope—A Lady With An Open Mind—Dr. Dawson's Larger View—The Universal Attraction.

III.

THE CHURCH IN TRANSITION.

No Definite Note of Warning—Preachers Afraid of Discipline—Divided As to Restoration or Extinction—Plea for Liberty—Liberalism of the Episcopal Church—Advance in Christian Unity—Dr. Edward White—Conditional Immortality—Endless Torment—If True Ought to Be Preached Morning, Noon and Night—Awful Penalty of Sin—Extinction—True Religion Is Reasonable—Enlarged Conceptions.

IV.

INFINITE JUSTICE.

A Strong Argument—Universal Atonement—Infinite Justice Satisfied—A Candid Methodist Minister—Can Man Commit An Infinite Sin?—Everlasting Punishment Could Not Be Rendered—Uses of Suffering—Punitive and Remedial—The Penalty Has Been Paid—Moral Effect—Mystery of Pain—Not Punishment but Chastening—Extending Our Outlook Beyond—Boundless Time and Space—Operations of Grace in the Next Life—Infinite Power—Infinite Mercy—Infinite Love—Incentive to Endless Praise.

V.

HARMONY OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Our Limitations—Development—Our Capacity—Divine Foreknowledge—No Divine Failure—The Heathen—Unchangeable Dove—Union of Four Attributes—Eternal Wisdom—A Marvel of Coercion and Freedom—The Day of Divine Power—An Unfathomable Mystery—Future Revelations—Coming to Zion with Songs.

VI.

THEORY OF EQUALITY.

Abraham Tucker's View—Ingenious and Reverent—Variety of Endowment—Maximum of Happiness—Imparting and Receiving New Ideas—Compensations—Infinite Justice.

VII.

PROCESSES OF PURIFICATION.

Different Processes—The Case of Saul—Changed in a Moment—No Violence to Human Freedom—The

Case of Nebuchadnezzar—Sudden or Slow—Basis of Warning—An Object Lesson—Function of Suffering.

VIII.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

Meagre Details—Good Reasons Why—Extent of the Universe—Future Glory—Sin in Other Worlds—No Revelation—Future Abode of the Righteous—Solid or Ethereal—Impossible Revelations—Present Duties and Interests—Our Limitations—Necessity of Purification—Preaching to the Spirits in Prison—Stages of Progress—The Law of Gradual Development.

IX.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

The Descent of Jesus Into Hades—Singular Reserve of Preachers—Purgatory—Dr. Gerhardt's Book—A Bodily Resurrection—The Spirit World Requires a Spirit Body.

X.

DIVINE LOVE.

Infinite Being and Perfection—Grades of Being—Variety—Man's Limitations—Moral Beings—Hopeless Surroundings—All Are the Children of God—Righting the Wrongs of Time—"The Heart of the Universe Is Love"—Eternal Conscious Torment Incredible—Conquering Power of Love—Eternal Purpose Will Not Fail—Omnipotence in the Moral Realm—The Divine Expression of Love—Universal Atonement Involves Universal Salvation—Final Success of God's Designs—Will Evil Necessarily Perpetuate Itself?—Triumph of Good Over Evil—Few Stripes or Many—Reformatory Punishment—Bringing Good Out of Evil—Possibilities of Redeeming Grace—The Ransomed of the Lord—Wrath but the Shadow of Love—Former Eternity of Sinlessness—Wrath No Constituent of the Divine Character—Pity and Indignation.

XI.

THE ATONEMENT.

Extent of the Atonement—The Dilemma of Universal Atonement and Partial Salvation—Human Systems of Truth—Methodist Theology—Tradition and Reason—Dr. Dale's View—No Divine Failure—Imperfection of All Theological Systems—"Sufficient but Not Efficient"—Undeveloped Possibilities—The Angel in the Apocalypse—Omnipotence Both in the Physical and the Moral Realm—The Short Epoch of Time—Advance of the Presbyterian Church in the United States—Individual Congregations—Hardening Effects of the Narrower View—The Softening Influence of Dreams—Divine Capacity of Suffering—Persistence of What Is Good—Good Men Who Are Not Christians—Insanity—Blind Tom.

XII.

A FEEBLE NOTE OF WARNING.

The Creed of Eternal Torment—Do Ministers Really Believe It?—If They Do, Why Not Say So?—No Decisive Note of Warning—Definite Missionary Incentive Is Wanting—The Phrase, "Eternal Death," Often Used—Does It Mean Annihilation, or Eternal Torment, or What?—Vague Reference to Punishment Fosters Unbelief—An Age of Compromise—Professor Faulkner's Testimony—The Idea of Restoration Would Fully Meet the Difficulty—Honesty and Candor—Carlyle's Scathing Warning—Ultimate

Fulfilment of Prophecy—Eternal Songs.

XIII.

PROPHECIES YET TO BE FULFILLED.

Enlarging Vision—Promise to Abraham—A Host of Similar Promises—Many of Them Not Merely National—Their Fulfilment—Not Limited by the Short Epoch of Time—The Present Only One Part of the Divine Administration—Why the Revelation Was Not Given Sooner—Groping in the Twilight—Growing Illumination—A Time for Everything—Dazzle or Enlighten—Discoveries in Science are Really Revelations—Our Slowness in Receiving Spiritual Truth—Limitations of Great Men.

XIV.

TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

The Unrevealed—Scripture and Reason—Bishop Butler's Dictum—Reverence of Kepler—Moral Courage of Sir Oliver Lodge—Increase of Laxity—The Spirit's Almighty Power—Supreme Authority of Scripture—The Proper Sphere of Reason—Fate of the Heathen—Singular Reserve of Preachers—Sin Is Abnormal—Union of Divine Power, Wisdom, and Love—Reasonableness and Harmony—A Multitude of Scripture Promises—Discipline Instead of Eternal Torment—Dr. Funk's View—The Great Panacea for Unbelief—Ingersoll—No Divine Failure.

XV.

TESTIMONY OF REASON.

Divine Gift of Reason—Its Proper Sphere—No Dogmatism—Is Sin An Infinite Evil?—Infinite Penalty Impossible to Be Rendered—Justice Can Delay—Good Cannot Perish—Testimony of Dickens—Endless Punishment Would Increase Moral Evil—The Divine Character Never Changes—Time but a Short Epoch—Our Capacity of Development—Salvation of Infants—The Insane—Imperfect Christians—Their Destiny—Good Unchristian Men—Where Will They Go?—"All Souls Are Mine"—Worth Preserving—Fate of the Heathen—Reclaimed in the Next Life—Human Freedom Never Destroyed—Provision for All—A Dreadful Hymn—Divine Sacrifice Not in Vain—Bringing Good Out of Evil—Final Triumph of Goodness—Sin Is Abnormal—Will Therefore Cease—Law of Gradual Change—Sins of the Mind—The Race Might Easily Have Been Intercepted—Endless Torment Cannot Be Believed—The Mind's Affinity for Truth—True Punishment Is Reformatory—Alleged Divine Cruelty—Agony of Eternal—Ingersoll and His Shafts of Ridicule—Incentive to Good Works—Unfathomable Divine Love—"Joy Cometh in the Morning"

XVI.

THE CASE OF SAUL.

Divine Methods of Reclaiming Men—"The Chief of Sinners"—Changed' in a Moment—No Violence Done to His Freedom—Yet Sovereign Power—The Mystery of Grace—View of McCosh—Supremacy of Conscience—Sir Isaac Newton's Wonderful Alertness of Mind—Reason and Intuition—Capturing the Most Incurable—Evil Environment—Suffering a Necessary Factor—Agony of Remorse—Eternal Hope.

XVII.

ETERNAL SEPARATIONS.

An Everlasting Pang—David and Absalom—Strained Ideas of Late Momentary Repentance—King Solomon—King Saul—The Gracious Character of Sympathy—George Eliot's View—A Strong Argument for Restoration—Heresy of a Minister's Wife—A Minister's Orthodox View—Wonderful Goodness of a

Criminal—Where Will He Finally Go?—Our Very Imperfect Friends—Glossing Over Their Faults When They Are Gone—Our Instinctive Hope for the Worst—Restoration the True Solution—A Final Era of Joy.

XVIII.

NOT REALLY BELIEVED.

Present Enthusiasm for Missions—Former Lassitude—The Basis of Missionary Enterprise—Supposed Damnation of the Heathen—If Really Believed Would Drive Us to Frenzy—Minister's Monday Meeting—Pretence Cuts the Nerve of Enthusiasm—Restoration the True Incentive—Effective Because Reasonable—Torment Not Really Believed—The Heart Often Truer Than the Head—Necessity for Preparatory State—Could Not Have Details Revealed—Orthodoxy of the Torment View—Trying to Believe It—Be Not Afraid of the Truth—Extreme Calvinists Signally Honored—The Reason Why—Our Innate God-given Convictions—Meagre Expenditure for Missions—Tacit Acknowledgment That Endless Suffering Is Not Believed.

XIX.

WORKING MEN AND THE CHURCH.

Efforts to Attract Working Men to the Church—Restoration Would Largely Solve the Difficulty—Common Sense of Working-Men—Glorious Expansion of Truth—Recasting Traditional Views—The True Basis for Unity.

XX.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

Beauty Evolved from Chaos—Future Capacity of Motion—Gleams of the Invisible—Changing Into the Divine Image—Crying Out for God—From Barrenness to Beauty—The Glow of the Firefly—The Effulgent Divinity—Universal Sense of Beauty—Sunset on the Prairie—Guardian Angels—Death As Seen from This Side and That—Sunset on Yellowstone River—A Drop of Dew—Reality of Heaven—The Literal and the Figurative—The Spiritual Body—Expanding Glory of Creation—Sunset in Dakota—Lights Dim and Clear—Christ's Unsullied Purity—A Rent in the Cloud—An Imprisoned Lark.

XXI.

THE FINAL DAY.

Everlasting Love—Resources of Infinite Wisdom and Power—Redemption of the Whole Race—Forecast of the Final Day—The Conquest of Love—Christ Is Satisfied—He Is Singing with Joy—Ancient Prophecy Fulfilled—Adoration of the Heavenly Hosts—The Saviour Crowned.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION.

The circumstances under which these pages came to be written are rather peculiar. I am in favor of church unity, and I had thought of writing something that would tend to bring the churches into closer harmony. I am persuaded that their unity of doctrine is greater than is usually supposed; I endeavored to make this apparent by citing a long list of doctrines on which the churches tacitly agree.

But in all faithfulness I had to recognize a striking difference of opinion when I came to speak of the doctrine of future punishment. On this profound question I had to recognize that there are honest differences of opinion. These could not be summarily dismissed by a hasty yea or nay.

There are three views that are entertained, which may be expressed thus: Extinction; Restoration; Endless Suffering. Not only do these different views prevail among different churches; they prevail also among individuals in all the churches. In fact, it would be hard to find a thoughtful church of any name in which each of these views is not represented.

While there is this diversity of view, there ought surely to be toleration. It is a profound subject; I am very conscious of that; yet I think there may be ultimate harmony if we are only candid enough to lay aside all prejudice, and give the matter our serious and impartial consideration. And surely, it is worthy of that. In my view, there is a right conception of the matter, which if generally entertained would go far to lift a dark shadow from the heart of the world.

For myself, I may say that I was brought up in an orthodox church that professes to believe in endless suffering. I had not, even at a mature age, examined that doctrine critically. In fact, I shrunk from examining it; I think most people do who professedly accept it. It is the doctrine of the church, and the easiest way is to assume that it is all right. If it was formulated by our learned and pious ancestors, the usual idea is that it's good enough for us.

A thoughtful mind, however, could not but recognize that there is a serious difference on this question in different churches that are admitted to be evangelical. Not only that, but there is a difference between thoughtful men in the same church. Hence, I was led to adopt, and to state, my own views here. The arguments that I was thus compelled to use expanded far beyond my expectation. Then I recognized that a plea for unity along with the advocacy of a contested vital doctrine, do not hang well together. Moreover, the space that I felt compelled to give to this doctrinal defense, induced me to cut it loose from my plea for unity, and present the matter separately.

* * * * *

On this most serious question I must say that I have read but very little. Even Dr. Farrar's standard work on "Eternal Hope" I have not read. But I considered this to be no serious disadvantage, on the whole. I conceived—and I think it was no undue egotism—that my own originality and naturalness would balance in a large degree the completeness which otherwise I might have attained. I think it is no small advantage to see the natural working of an open mind, not warped by other people's opinions and arguments.

But there was more than that. It is said of Christ that He is "The true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." I cannot but think that I have had some illumination from that Source. Once in the night season, when I wished above all things to sleep, I was kept awake, and an idea came to me that was never in my mind before. In the morning the idea was written down. The following night the same thing would occur again, and again a new thought was written down. The same thing continued for weeks, with hardly an intermission.

It did not strike me until afterwards that this might be a special, divine illumination. Yet why should it not be, except that I was utterly unworthy? But then I remembered that it is to "every man," however unworthy he may be, that this divine Light comes. So it may come to many when they do not know it.

In this case it was not really so surprising. When we think of the Power and Grace that are so bound up with the theory of Restoration that are as yet so little recognized, might we not expect special, divine aid in making known such a glorious revelation? As I have noticed elsewhere in this treatise, neither of the two alternative theories brings anything like such glory to Christ as the theory of Restoration. Is not this an overwhelming argument that the theory is true?

At all events, there is now more toleration for such views than there was some time ago. I know that many Congregational ministers hold to the doctrine of Conditional Immortality; and there is no bar to such views in that church. Dr. Farrar's "Eternal Hope" does him no discredit to-day in the Episcopal Church. So with Dr. Edward White's doctrine of Conditional Immortality. But there are some who still hold tenaciously to the orthodox faith, and are quick to resent any departure from it.

Well do I remember a conference that was held in Dr. Parker's Tabernacle in London several years ago. The occasion was the meeting with the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher. The large church where we met was nearly filled with ministers. During Mr. Beecher's talk one of these zealots for orthodoxy flung out the inquiry, "Do you believe in everlasting punishment?" Beecher—manly man that he was—immediately responded that he did not. At once there was an uproar. The great majority, I believe, whether in sympathy with Mr. Beecher or not, would have allowed the matter to pass in respectful silence. But there was a small minority who felt bound to stand up for orthodoxy. For a time there was great confusion. I remember Parker's dignified protest. "Brethren," he said, "this is a Conference; it is not an Inquisition."

Truly, it does seem strange that men should be ostracised for not believing that the great majority of mankind is in everlasting fire! That is really the sum and substance of their offending. It seems that is an offense for which no greatness or goodness can atone. In the case referred to the man who was condemned was confessedly head and shoulders above his peers. Yet we boast of our culture and progress, and our emancipation from medieval darkness. Truly, it would be funny, if it were not sad.

* * * * *

On the occasion referred to I had no sympathy with Mr. Beecher's view, nor for several years after. But the idea took hold of me about five years ago. So far as I know, it came spontaneously; no, perhaps not spontaneously, but as a direct suggestion from the unseen. I had been reading nothing that would naturally lead up to it; I had no former leanings in that direction; nor was I in contact with any person who would suggest it. But suddenly the idea took hold of me, and pursued me night after night with new arguments. All the time there was nothing in my reach along this line that I could read; and I had read almost nothing beforehand. So I sought for nothing, realizing that it might be better to present the case solely from my own point of view.

I mention these matters in no spirit of egotism, but simply to show that the matter occurred to me at a time unlooked for, and without any extraneous help. If I had resorted to outside aids, I might perhaps have made the argument more complete; but would I have made it more convincing?

* * * * *

I am not in the habit of ventilating these views on all occasions; but in certain cases lately there were some remarkable results. For instance: I met a Presbyterian minister whom I knew, and we drifted into these ideas. I said I would give him one argument for universal salvation, and one only. When I had stated the argument he said it was absolutely conclusive, and that there could be no such thing as endless torment.

Lately, I met a Presbyterian D.D. on the train, and we drifted into these questions. He argued the case strongly from the orthodox point of view, and I defended the more liberal theory. We argued the question for two hours. When we were at the end of our journey he frankly confessed that he was quite with me, and that he "had gone through the mill." Yet that D.D. is supposed to be orthodox. I believe he is one of many who suppress their honest inner convictions.

A teacher in the Methodist body, a man of deep thought, and fine culture, during a few minutes' conversation, endorsed several of my views, and began to advance some of his own.

Lately, I visited a highly cultured Christian lady, who was once a member of my congregation, and I referred casually to some of these ideas. Thinking afterwards that I might really have done her an injury by merely mooting such a subject, I went back the next evening, and went into it fully. The result was that she expressed her hearty concurrence in such views.

Cases like these convince me that the public mind is more open than it was some time ago, and that when the matter is presented reasonably, in many instances it will be accepted. Surely, the light of God is beginning to shine into our gloom!

* * * * *

I suppose that the contracted view of divine love and power that prevailed in former times was largely due to the failure of men to see that God rules in all worlds and through all time. Because grace does not take effect in the case of every person now and here, it was concluded that this was a part of the divine decree; for could not God do as it pleased Him? But now we realize that this life is not all; that divine love and power are from everlasting to everlasting; that we see here but "parts of His ways;" that the great redemptive scheme may be completed in the ages to come.

* * * * *

In this treatise I have chiefly in view the great mass of people who believe in the plain statements of Scripture, and also in reason. And I will say this, for the sake of those who have been brought up with the idea that the Scripture teaches eternal torment, that there are many incorrect Scripture translations, and that these largely account for the long persistence of the old theory. Its origin is really due to the Roman Catholic Church, which invented it to keep its adherents in due subjection.

It is well to note that in two of the views I have referred to there is a degree of harmony. In the theory of Extinction and that of Restoration there is a tacit repudiation of endless torment. That seems to be an intuition in harmony with our highest range both of thought and feeling, when thought and feeling are not unduly warped by tradition. The old theory may sound orthodox; it may be consecrated

by many tender memories; but I would ask if you have thought over it seriously, and if in your inmost soul you believe it. Then be faithful to that inner conviction. It is the light of God. It is what Carlyle calls "the direct Inspiration of the Almighty."

* * * * *

Pending the final solution of this great problem, I think there ought to be enough charity to disagree, with all good will and mutual confidence. And in all contemplated union of the churches this liberty ought to be clearly recognized. For this question, though of tremendous importance, is not a saving one by any means. Men, of whose goodness there can be no question, hold different views. Truth is greater than orthodoxy, and is sometimes to be found outside of orthodoxy. In this connection, the words of Professor Faulkner, of Toronto University, are well worth pondering. He says: "The fear of not being orthodox is, in my opinion, the reason why theology is under a cloud at the present time."

Closely related to this subject, it may be opportune to quote an article of mine that lately appeared in the "*Homiletic Review*" on the "Doctrinal Basis of Union in Canada."

The contemplated organic union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches in Canada has not yet been consummated. One thing that involved some delay has been the discovery of a basis of doctrine that would suit the three churches. At length such a basis has been formulated. It contains one statement, however, which I am rather surprised to see. It says that the doom of the finally impenitent will be "eternal death." Now what does that mean? Might it not be honestly taken to mean two very different things? Might it not be taken to mean "eternal torment" or "eternal extinction?" The manifest ambiguity of such a statement would seem to me highly objectionable. I quoted the phrase to two thoughtful friends, and asked them what it meant. They made a long pause, and said they did not know.

If the phrase has been adopted on purpose to make it the expression of the two views referred to, such a course is surely wanting in candor and honesty. To be sure, it is a Scriptural phrase, but inasmuch as it is taken to express two very different views, it ought not to be adopted. By all means be clear and simple and straightforward.

There has been too much vagueness on the part of preachers on this most solemn theme. Lately I heard a preacher speaking of unsaved men as "miserable failures, going out into the darkness." Now what did he mean? Either he has no definite idea himself, or he judged it unwise to express it. Does not such a statement as I have quoted pander directly to infidelity?

Surely, the time has come when we ought candidly to recognize that on this question there may be a legitimate difference of opinion. There are men whose godliness and ability are beyond all question, who hold diverse views on this matter. Whether it be the theory of eternal torment or extinction or Restoration that is held, let us concede all honor and confidence to the men who hold it. The more of that spirit we really possess, the sooner will the divine light break upon our souls.

With regard to a basis on which conscientious men can really unite, is it well to go so much into detail? Mere creeds will never conserve the truth. Men will think, whether we will or no; and men will have diverse views. Do we not put a premium on dishonesty by constructing a creed for all details, and expecting men to subscribe to that creed? Have we not had too much of that in the past? A noted official in the Methodist body told me lately that he does not believe in eternal torment, but that if it were known, he would lose his position. But eternal torment is in the Methodist creed, and he had profest his adherence to it. It is so with many Presbyterians. I have spoken privately with several, and not one profest to believe in that doctrine. But we say, "Truth is mighty and will prevail." Yes, I believe it will; but it would surely prevail faster if we were always loyal to it. Besides, is there anything that makes more directly for degeneracy of character than such evasion?

To avoid all peril of this kind, how would it do to take for a basis of doctrine this simple statement. "I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God?" Or, "I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to contain the Word of God?" Then, with further "light breaking from God's holy word," we would not need to expunge anything from our creed, or add anything to it.

For the present, let us be faithful to the light we have. As Canon Farrar well says: "There is but one failure; and that is, not to be true to the best one knows."

* * * * *

It will be noted that throughout this discussion I have made no attempt to indicate anything of the nature of the divine reformatory processes in the next life. That is far beyond me. The principle may be the same that operates now, but the details may be very different, and the effects produced may be

quick or slow, just as in this life. We have instanced the case of Saul's conversion as exceptionally thorough and immediate. There may be somewhat similar cases in the next life; we do not know; but there is reasonable ground for hope. Then too, as now, there may be cases of incorrigibility which ages may be required to redeem.

* * * * *

Mistranslations of certain passages of Scripture on this subject are so numerous, and in some cases so utterly opposed to the original, that I made out a list of them, to be presented here. On second thought I have omitted them, for the reason that this treatise is intended more especially for plain, common sense people, who do not trouble much about translations, but who are dominated largely by reason and good sense. For those who give more attention to translations, I could wish that some competent and impartial person would compile a list of mistranslations and present them as a separate treatise.

* * * * *

I am satisfied that in the English Bible there is abundant support for every position I have taken. I do not mean merely direct, verbal support; but also the support of reason and common feeling, which come from the same divine Source.

I can well conceive, however, that some may have a conscientious fear that there may be something in the original that is opposed to the views that I have taken. It may appear very unlikely that the orthodox views that have so long prevailed should find such wide currency if they are not supported by revelation. It cannot be denied, however, that the translators of the Scriptures in many instances were strongly imbued beforehand with certain of those doctrines, and that in many cases they wrested the Scriptures to support them. So much is this the case that corrections and modifications have since been made—in some cases totally contrary to the original translations.

Along with this, let it be remembered that there is, and rightly, a strong conservative feeling against meddling with the Divine Word. Notwithstanding this, there is in all honesty a feeling that certain translations call for a radical amendment. I think this statement will be thoroughly borne out by some of the translations I will quote.

I have thus been moved to give some instances of mistranslation. Since writing the foregoing I have met with a treatise by Rev. Arthur Chambers, an English Episcopal minister, in which he quotes a great number of these. A number of them bear so directly on the matter we are treating that I feel that I cannot do better than quote some of them here. And in order to do this author justice, I will give also some of his own comments.

Mr. Chambers writes:

THE MEANING OF THE WORD "HADES."

The Greek language contains two words which are used many times in the New Testament—"Gehenna" and "Hades."

When the Greek New Testament was translated into English, one English word—"Hell"—was, very unfortunately, made to do service for the two Greek words named above. "Hell" was used to express both the place of future punishments, and also the abode of those, who having departed the Earth-life, are existing as disembodied spirits, physically disembodied.

As was to be expected, confusion of ideas soon arose in consequence, and ordinary readers became bewildered.

Such a passage is Acts ii. 31: "His soul was not left in Hell," and the clause in the Apostles' Creed—"He descended into Hell"—instead of being understood as expressing that Christ at His crucifixion entered into Hades, seem to teach that He went into the place of punishment—Hell; where He never went.

THE EARLY-CHRISTIAN CONCEPTION OF HADES.

The foregoing conclusion is well-nigh unassailable, in view of the fact that the early Christians believed in an Intermediate State, which they, like the Jews and Greeks, called "Hades."

Justin Martyr (A.D. 147) declares that "those who say that there is no Resurrection, but that, immediately after death, their souls are taken up to Heaven, these are not to be accounted either

Christians or Jews."

Tertullian (A.D. 200) states that "the souls of all men go to Hades until the Resurrection; the souls of the just being in that part of Hades called the 'Bosom of Abraham,' or 'Paradise.'"

Origen (A.D. 230) expresses the same views. Lactantius (A.D. 306) writes, "Let no one think that souls are judged immediately after death; for they are all detained in the same common place of keeping, until the time come when the Supreme Judge shall enquire into their good or evil deeds."

Our English New Testament represents the rich man as being in Hell. But the translation is a false one. In the original Greek it is, "In Hades he lifted up his eyes."

So, then, the rich man, though in another sphere than that of Lazarus, was also in Hades. I am aware that some teachers have viewed this parable as depicting the future condition of man, in happiness or misery, in Heaven or Hell. But besides the locality in which the two persons are placed being actually named, the context is against such a supposition. At the time that Lazarus and Dives are shown in their after-death experiences, this world is still in existence, and the brothers of the rich man are then living on the earth, and the Judgment is still distant. But Heaven and Hell will follow, not precede, the close of the present Dispensation and the Judgment. We conclude, therefore, that this parable distinctly affirms the truth of an Intermediate-life.

The terms "eternal judgment" and "eternal punishment," have been dinned into their ears of many from infancy, and they are unaware of the fact that "eternal" is not a correct translation of the original Greek word [Greek: aionios]; and moreover, that this word, "eternal" denotes without beginning as well as without end, and is misapplied to anything that is not beginningless. Again, there are hosts of earnest seekers after God and truth (as numbers of letters sent to me testify), whose acceptance of the Gospel of Christ is barred by this doctrine of everlasting punishment. They suppose it to be a part of the teaching of the Saviour; and they cannot embrace a religion which requires assent to something that shocks all their moral instincts. For the sake of such persons, it seems only right that we should examine this doctrine; that we should show them what it really is, and upon what foundation it has been built. Thus, and only thus, will they be brought to see that this ugly human conception is not of God.

THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT HAS BEEN BUILT.

We must look for this in the mistranslation of a few words in the Greek New Testament. These words are:—(aion); (aionios); (krima); (krisis); (krinein); and (katakrinein).

We shall show that the translators have dealt most misleadingly and inconsistently with these words. They have translated them, in a number of passages of Scripture in which they appear, strictly in accordance with their true meanings, while into the words as they occur in other passages they have imported meanings not only exaggerated and awful, but such as to make Scripture contradictory of itself.

For the substantiation of this serious charge, we refer the reader to the following *facts* concerning each of the words instanced.

(a) The word (aion), and the adjective derived from it, (aionios).

We place these words first, because they are the terms that have been rendered by the translators—"world without end," "forever and ever," "everlasting," and "eternal;" and it is upon the basis of these false renderings that the terrible doctrine of everlasting punishment has been reared.

The word [Greek: aion], in the singular, denotes an age, a period of indefinite, but limited, duration, which may be either long or short. In the plural, the word denotes ages, or periods, that may be extended, and even vast, but still of limited duration.

The word cannot denote unendingness, commonly, but erroneously, termed "eternity" by those who forget that eternity is without beginning as well as without end. Else, how could the plural of the word be used, and how could Scripture speak of "the aions" and "the aions of the aions" (i.e., "the ages," and "the ages of the ages")? There can be no plural to "eternity," and it is surely an absurdity to talk about "the eternities" and "the eternities of the eternities." And yet the translators, in some instances have deliberately imported into the word [Greek: aion] the meaning of everlastingness, while excluding it in other instances.

Here is an example, out of many:

In Mark iii. 29, the passage, according to the Greek, is: "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath not forgiveness all through the aion (age), but is in danger of aional judgment (i.e., the judgment of an age)."

The translators have rendered this: "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness (i.e., not forgiveness forever), but is in danger of eternal damnation."

In this case, it will be seen that they have imported the idea of unendingness into the word [Greek: aion] and the idea of "eternal" into its adjective, [Greek: aionios].

In Matthew xiii. 39, the passage, according to the Greek is: "The harvest is the end of the aion (age);" and in 2 Tim. iv. 10: "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present aion (age)."

The translators have rendered these passages: "The harvest is the end of the world." "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." In these cases, it will be seen that they have rightly excluded the idea of unendingness from the word [Greek: aion]. But why? we ask. If it was right to include it in Mark iii. 29, it was wrong to exclude it in the two last-named passages. Then why exclude it? The answer is, that it would have been too utterly foolish to translate Matthew xiii. 39, as "The harvest is the end of the forever," and 2 Tim. iv. 10, as "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved the present eternity"—and so the translators in these instances gave the word its true signification.

But can it, we ask, be right to treat language in this way—to make a word mean one thing to serve the purposes of a doctrinal idea, and to make it mean something essentially opposite, when that idea is not involved? Does anyone imagine that the translators would have introduced this contradiction, and have translated the Greek of Mark xiii. 29, as they have done, unless they had gone to this text with the preconceived idea that a certain sin can never be forgiven, and therefore that the passage must be strained and contorted to endorse the idea? It is an instance, not of founding theology upon Scripture, but of twisting Scripture to suit theology. One thing is quite certain. It cannot be right to translate a word in some passages in one sense, and to translate it in other passages in an antagonistic sense. The word [Greek: aion] cannot denote a period of limitation, and also unendingness. If it denotes the one it does not denote the other. The one definition excludes the other. No one, in his senses, dreams of defining a day as a period of twelve hours under one set of circumstances, and also as being the equivalent of all time under other circumstances. We have to determine what is the true definition of [Greek: aion]. If it can be shown that the essential meaning of the word is that of limited duration, then the case is very clear; the translators were not justified in foisting into it the idea of unendingness; and this being so, a huge superstructure of doctrine, reared upon the mistranslation, will totter and fall, and an awful nightmare will be lifted from the Christian religion.

An adjective qualifies its noun, and we cannot import into the adjective more than is contained in the noun. We may speak of the race of mankind as "humanity," and describe the existence of the race as "human life," but we should not be so absurd as to define "human" in that phrase as signifying "Divine."

And yet the translators have been guilty of committing a similar error in translating the word [Greek: aion] in the passages instanced as "world," which is equivalent to an age, and expresses limitation; while translating [Greek: aionios] as "everlasting" and "eternal," both of which terms exclude limitation.

We ask, does this commend itself as being a fair way of dealing with a book which contains a record of Divine truth?

We pass on to the brief consideration of a few other words that have been dealt with unfairly, in order, if not to found, at all events to buttress, this doctrine of everlasting punishment.

(b) The word (krima). The word denotes judgment; the sentence pronounced. As such the translators of the Authorized Version rightly rendered it in many passages of the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles (e.g., Matt. vii. 2; John ix. 39; Acts xxiv. 25; and Rom. ii. 2). But here is the inconsistency. In Matt. xxiii. 14; Mark xii. 40; Luke xx. 47; Rom. in. 8; xiii. 2; I Cor. xi. 29; and I Tim. v. 12, they substituted the word "damnation" for it. We will say nothing about this word "damnation," except that it is an evil-sounding word, whose original meaning has been exaggerated and perverted; and a word that more than any other has been employed to support the awful doctrine we are opposing.

But why did the translators alter the reading? Why render [Greek: krima] as "judgment" in some places, and as "damnation" in others? The answer is—These last named passages were viewed as pointing to future punishment; the translators' idea of future punishment was that of endless suffering and misery; and the word "damnation" was considered to be better suited to the popular theological error than the proper and milder word, "judgment." Our contention is, if the word "damnation" be right in one passage, it is right in another. Why, for example, did they not translate John ix. 39, so as to represent our Lord as saying—"For damnation ([Greek: krimas]) I came into this world?" They gave the

true rendering in this and other passages, because it would have been too absurd not to do so.

That these criticisms are not unjustified is seen in the fact that the New Testament revisers have discarded the word "damnation" in the above passages, and in Rom. xiii. 2 and I Cor. xi. 29, have correctly rendered [Greek: kríma] as "judgment."

We are thankful to them for this service in the interests of truth.

We must briefly consider—

(c) The word (krisis).

It also denotes judgment, i.e., the process of judging; and in forty-one passages of the New Testament the translators so rendered it. But in Matt, xxiii. 33; Mark in. 29; and John v. 29, they deliberately substituted the word "damnation" for "judgment." With what object? Plainly, to add emphasis to their preconceived idea of an endless hell. But does this commend itself as being a fair and consistent way of dealing with Scripture?

Why,—except that it was too utterly foolish,—not have rendered the following passages as they did the three just instanced?

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye ... pass over damnation ([Greek: krisis]) and the love of God" (Luke xi. 42).

"As I hear, I judge, and My damnation ([Greek: krisis]) is just" (John v. 30).

"So opened He not His mouth; in His humiliation His damnation ([Greek: krisis])_ was taken away" (Acts viii. 32, 33).

Seeing that the Greek word is the same in every one of these passages, is it not very wrong to give it an improper and grossly exaggerated significance in three texts, while translating it correctly in forty-one other instances?

Again, it is suggestive that the revisers of the New Testament, in Matt, xxiii. 33 and John v. 29, have flung away the word "damnation," and in its place put "judgment" as the proper rendering of [Greek: krisis]. If the translators of the Authorized Version had done this, one of the supports of an ancient error would have been knocked down.

(d) The word (krinein).

The word denotes—to *judge*; and eighty-one times in the New Testament the translators so rendered it. And yet in regard to the same Greek word which occurs in 2 Thess. ii. 12, they made the translation run:—"That they all might be *damned* who believed not the truth."

But why not have been consistent? Why not have rendered 1 Cor. vi. 2, in this way; since in both passages the verb [Greek: krinein] is the same,—"*Do ye not know that the saints shall damn the world? And if the world shall be damned by you, are ye unworthy to damn the smallest matters?*"

I will trouble the reader with only one other word.

(e) The word (katakrinein). Its meaning is—to condemn. It is a stronger word than [Greek: krinein] to judge, but there is nothing in it that corresponds to that awful meaning supposed to reside in the word "damn." And yet the translators did not hesitate to give it that meaning.

How did they treat this verb, [Greek: katakrinein]? Just as they treated other verbs and nouns, when they wished to bolster their theological idea. In seventeen instances in the New Testament they translated it rightly as "condemn," but in Mark xvi. 16 and Rom. xiv. 23, doctrinal preconceptions prevailed, and so these two passages were rendered—"He that believeth not shall be damned." "He that doubteth is damned if he eat."

And for centuries, an everlasting hell-fire has been read unto the mistranslated word.

* * * * *

I might continue in this strain at great length. The quotations I have given may be taken as samples of many more. It is surely time that the sad and sombre clouds of so-called orthodoxy should be dispelled by the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

The word "for ever," taken in its rigid literal sense, is a stumbling block to many. I lately asked a very

eminent man in England, the president of a theological college, how he would get over that difficulty. He replied that he believed that the word "aion" would more fully meet the case, and that that word would more exactly accord with the capacity of our finite mind, the word "forever" expressing an idea entirely beyond our comprehension. That seems to be good sense, and more in harmony with the whole trend of Revelation.

* * * * *

I have issued this treatise under an assumed name; not because I am specially careful of my reputation, but rather because I wish the work to be regarded solely on its own merits. If any reader feels disposed to write me, either briefly or more at length, and whether in criticism or commendation, I shall be glad.

Address,

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I.

DIFFERENT THEORIES.

Fear of punishment—Early Impressions—Men of piety and learning—Fact and figures—Mental or material fire—The theory of conditional immortality—Why invented—Moody—Divine failure impossible—Future operations of grace—Restoration—A plea for charity—Other worlds—The heathen—Devout use of the imagination.

There is a general fear of suffering after death. Such fear may be derived in part from early impressions and education, and in part from the conscience that God has given to every man. But whatever their secondary origin, these sources of fear have been divinely ordained as means to an end. Such fear could not be divinely inspired if it were not founded on fact. And the fact is, that there is suffering in reserve for evil doers. There is no mistaking the statements of Scripture as well as the voice of conscience on that point.

What that suffering is, for what object inflicted, and how long it will continue, have been of late years much discussed, and with diverse views. Some of these views are very literal interpretations of the divine Word, and others of them are very figurative. The fact is, it is not always easy to distinguish between symbolism and reality, whether in nature or in revelation. I remember that the first time that I saw Mount Tacoma in the distance, I could not distinguish as to what was mountain and what was cloud. When I got very near, then I knew. And so in several Scripture statements it is not easy, for the present, to distinguish between what is fact and what is figure. When we get nearer no doubt we shall know. So it is with the nature and the duration of future punishment. Some take a more literal, and some a more figurative view. The result is, that the Christian world is at wide variance on the subject. And I think he would be a bold man, and not a very wise one, who could be very dogmatic in such a realm of investigation.

* * * * *

Now, with regard to the portion of the wicked in the next life, there are three main theories that are held.

First: There is the theory of everlasting conscious torment of the most terrific kind. It is not clearly defined whether the suffering is of the body or the mind, or both; but the general idea is that it is of both. The bodily suffering is usually conceived of as being inflicted by fire; but whether the fire is material or of some other kind, is not clearly defined. The mental suffering is usually represented as the most bitter remorse.

Then second: There is the theory of extinction at death or after. The idea is that there is utter destruction both of the body and the mind at some period.

Then again: Some hold that the wicked are given another opportunity after this life of obtaining

salvation; that many will do so, and that the remainder will be destroyed. We may call this the theory of extinction.

DR. EDWARD WHITE'S THEORY.

Some are very definite in locating the period of a second probation as co-extensive with the Millennial reign. Others do not pretend to know when it will happen, or how long it will last; they simply believe it will happen. This idea of a second probation is very similar to Dr. Edward White's theory of Conditional Immortality. He held that life in the Scripture simply means life, and that death simply means death. He believed that those who are fit for life will live, and that the rest will perish.

I would say here that the idea of Conditional Immortality, favored by many, does not seem to me to be well conceived. Evidently the theory was invented in order to escape the doctrine of endless torment. The idea is, that if you are fit to live you are destined for a glorious immortality; otherwise you are extinguished. Such a view does not seem to comport with our highest thoughts of God, and His ways of working. In my mind, it represents God as being too dependent on circumstances. When we realize that Christ died not only for "all," but for "every man"; and when we realize that the invitations of mercy are extended to "every man," without equivocation, it does seem to me something like a failure of the divine plan if "every man" is not saved.

But since every man is evidently not saved in this life, we project our view into the next life, and we think of God's operations of grace there. No doubt that is a larger view than that which has so long prevailed. But it is not unreasonable by any means. Divine operations are surely not restricted to this short epoch of time. God's mercy is from everlasting to everlasting.

And can anything defeat His purpose? He has expressed His purpose to save all men, in the fact that He gave His Son to die for the world, and that He invites all the world to be partakers in the great salvation. That is His purpose; and "His purpose will stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

We should never forget this great truth. As Mr. Robert E. Speer well says:

"We escape much difficulty from literalistic and mechanical interpretations by remembering that both space and time are merely conceptions of our present order, and that there is neither space nor time in God."

The third theory is, that everyone will be restored. Those who hold this view do not generally define the period when this will take place, or the means that will be used to bring it about; but they believe that the wisdom, love, and power of God will somehow be effectual to that end.

I think that these are mainly the views that are entertained on this most solemn subject. And it must be said that each one of them is apparently supported by one or more passages of Scripture. Men of the most devout spirit, intellectual acumen, and profound scholarship, uphold these various theories. Such men are honest and sincere in the last degree; above all things anxious to know what God has revealed in His Word.

UNFOLDING LIGHT OF REVELATION.

Yet on this momentous question they differ. It is really no wonder. I think I may say that there is no clear deliverance in Scripture, in absolute support of either of these views; or if there is, it is offset by some other statement that seems contrary. In the unfolding light of revelation we do not seem to have come to the time when this momentous question will be made absolutely and universally plain. It may be one of those questions on which we are to exercise faith alone. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" That was Abraham's consolation when he did not know what God was going to do. And it may be our consolation. The Judge of all the earth will certainly do right. Yes, and He will do more than right. He is love. We can rest on that. Uncertainty as to details may best become us now. But the eternal morning will break and the shadows flee away. Meantime, while this uncertainty prevails, surely there ought to be abounding charity of judgment.

When we come to think of it, we are not so much surprised that we have but a partial and limited revelation on this subject. There may be more divine kindness in that than at first sight appears. When we contemplate the vastness of creation, we see that there are myriads of other worlds far larger and more glorious than our own. Every one of these is likely to have a moral history—it may be more important than ours.

Now, if we had a complete revelation of the destiny of our race, possibly that would involve a history of some or many of those worlds; for the affairs of this world may be largely involved in theirs.

Therefore, if God would give us such a revelation now, we can easily see that it is quite beyond us; the subject would be too vast for us now and here; we would be utterly bewildered, and rendered unfit for the ordinary duties of life. How much wiser and kinder it is to give us but a limited revelation, leaving unrevealed matters entirely to faith.

SUFFICIENT REVELATION.

It is not remarkable, then, that so little is revealed, even of Heaven. We do not know what activities will have place there. What particular business will engage redeemed souls, we do not know. We have a sufficient revelation to stimulate hope, but not enough to pander to curiosity. Such a limited revelation as we could receive would probably only confuse us. It is not remarkable, then, that we have but a meagre account of the preparatory processes for final blessedness.

Yet, while all this is true, we can hardly help inclining more or less to one or other of the theories named, in reference to the future. But in this, as I have just said, we ought to be very charitable with each other, as to our special conviction. If it were a fundamental question, likely the Word of God would have made it plain. But it is not a fundamental question. We may take whichever view seems the most agreeable with Scripture or with reason; and for so doing we ought not to be ostracised as heretics.

On this very question of future suffering there has been far too much intolerance. The theory of eternal torment has especially been held to be the only orthodox view. Surely, it is time for more liberality. On this question I would make a special appeal for charity and good-will, on the ground that there is no positive deliverance in revelation.

If anyone claims that there is, I would ask, How comes it that men of the highest character and candor take different views? The time may come when we shall see eye to eye on this matter; or it may not come in this life.

Meantime we can agree to differ. What are we that we should arrogate to ourselves any assumption of certainty on a matter unrevealed, that takes us into the eternities, and fixes the doom of uncounted millions of our race?

THE DEPARTED MORE AMENABLE.

Explain it as we may, we have always to remember that there are myriads of human beings living now, and other myriads who have departed, who had no chance to know the way of life. Will not the God of all mercy and of all resource provide them with a chance on the other side of death? The mere accident of death makes no change in them. And who knows if the departed may not be more amenable to good influence then, than now? I have heard of heathens who heard the Gospel but once, and they received it, and were saved. It may be so with poor lost souls who had no opportunity on this side of time.

One thing I cannot understand; and that is, the liberal terms in which men at times express themselves, who yet profess the narrow orthodox view. I do not say they are insincere; but it does seem as if they deliberately ignored their own creed, and that they spoke for the time out of the conviction and sincerity of their hearts. Just now, glancing through a certain magazine, I have come on an instance of this kind. The writer is a professor in a so-called orthodox Seminary. I leave any fair-minded reader to say if his utterances are at all in harmony with his professed orthodoxy. Here are a few of his sentences, selected almost at random from a long article:

"In this swift day of unmatched opportunity, the Church is laboring, perplexed and heavy, over its message." That is true enough. And I think the secret of the Church being "perplexed and heavy" is, that preachers must have an inward, unspoken conviction that their message of a limited salvation is unworthy of God, and unsuited to the needs of the world. No wonder the Church is "perplexed and heavy!"

Again this author says: "Men want to know that all the lines of diverse human life converge into one infinite, beneficent hand." But if that "infinite, beneficent hand" has cast by far the greater part of the human race into eternal torment, it is no wonder if thoughtful men are "perplexed and heavy."

Yet the writer of this article believes in universal love. He says: "Men want to see that their single life, so lost alone, is vitally bound into the bundle of universal love." So the author's instinct is better than his creed. He professes to believe in universal love. That is surely all right. But notwithstanding that, he professes to believe that untold millions of the human race are in endless suffering.

In another place he says: "Men long to be assured that this is no universe of short, fortuitous details." He also says: "The Kingdom of God is too great for less than universal participation." Is this not

universalism? Yet, if the author were asked, would not his creed require him to repudiate such an idea?

Again, this author says: "A few years ago science and human thought were accepting an account of life which let a man fall like a beast in the field, or a tree in the wood. To-day that explanation satisfies no one. It is agreed that the meaning of life can be complete only in terms of spirit and immortality." Is not the old doctrine of reprobation here utterly denied? Yet that old doctrine of reprobation stands in the creed of the orthodox church to-day.

One more quotation will suffice. Speaking of the divine plan, the author says that it is "a plan so complete that no sparrow falls beyond it, that no act falls fruitless, that there shall never be one lost good, that no living soul made in God's image can ever drift beyond His love and care." Is not this a flat contradiction of the author's orthodox creed? We believe that all he claims is absolutely true. But is he candid? Why has not the church the courage to expunge the old fatalism from her creed, and present to the world a statement that she really believes? I am persuaded that such candor is the desideratum of the world to-day.

To a thoughtful mind, the most evangelical preachers are at times unintelligible, and even contradictory, on such themes. Take this extract from a sermon by Mr. Moody, published some time ago. He says "Christ will return to the earth, for he has bought it with his own blood, and is going to have it. He has redeemed it; and the Father is going to give it to him."

Now, what does Mr. Moody mean when he says that Christ has bought the earth, and that He is going to have it? Of course, it must be the population of the earth that he means; otherwise, the words would have no sense. Then, did Christ purchase the whole population? If He did, there would be great equity in Him claiming the whole. But Mr. Moody would be one of the last men to admit that Christ will claim the whole of mankind. On the contrary, he professes to believe that the greater portion of mankind is lost beyond all recall!

Such is the confusion and contradiction in which men involve themselves, who are otherwise the excellent of the earth. There is no contradiction, however, but glorious harmony, in the idea that Christ will claim the whole of mankind for His own, because he has bought them every one, and has omnipotent power to claim them.

I feel that I ought almost to apologise for using the word "claim" at all in such a conception. It looks too much as if the Father and the Son were somewhat at variance in the glorious scheme of salvation. A thousand times No. I even doubt if in the actual suffering of Christ, the Father did not really suffer by sympathy as much as He! This is holy ground!

Consider this. We are commanded to preach the gospel to every creature. But where would be the honesty of preaching the Gospel of salvation to one for whom no salvation is-possible? For certainly, no salvation is possible for anyone for whom Christ did not atone. But it is now tacitly admitted by all evangelical churches that He died for all, notwithstanding that the doctrine of a limited atonement is still asserted in the Presbyterian Confession of Faith. Well it may; for if the atonement were acknowledged to be universal, then this difficulty would have to be faced—Why are all not saved? According to the doctrine quoted elsewhere, that God infallibly accomplishes everything at which He aims, all must infallibly be saved. For God certainly aimed at that consummation in giving His Son as a ransom for all. Here is a crux from which, it seems to me, there is no possible escape.

There is also this weakness—I might say this contradiction—in the Methodist theology. They say that Christ died for all; but they teach that all are not saved. Then He must have died in vain in regard to those that are lost. That is the inevitable corollary. Not only did He die in vain in their case; but His intention and desire was, not to die in vain in reference to any. He certainly aimed at their salvation in dying for them; but He does not accomplish it. To such horrible absurdities are we reduced by denying that He died for all, or that He will save all. The only logical, reverent, and divine solution seems to be that He intended to save all, and that He will do it. "God will infallibly accomplish everything at which He aims."

I lately heard an address—one of the best that I have heard—by a Canon of the Episcopal Church. His theme was: The work and aims of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The address was scholarly, lucid, earnest; and the language was absolutely perfect.

But like every address that I have heard on kindred subjects, it never so much as hinted at the results in the next life, if we failed in the duty the speaker so strongly recommended. Not once did he speak of eternal torment as a possible issue. What a tremendous incitement to duty is here, could it be but presented with the accent of conviction. But as a matter of fact, it is never presented at all, except in terms so vague that they actually mean nothing.

I do not know, in the case I have referred to, if the Canon believes in everlasting fire. Nor do I know that the creed of the Episcopal Church endorses it. What a glorious opportunity is here for an earnest and consistent minister in that church to publicly denounce such a doctrine as a hideous dream! So far as I know, he would not expose himself thereby, as in most other churches, to pains and penalties. I think, on the contrary, a vast number would rally around him, both in his own church and outside of it. Is not the religious world waiting for some pronounced leadership on this question? I am convinced that there are thousands of prominent ministers who do not believe in eternal torment, but who keep up a pretense of doing so, in order to avoid loss of reputation—perhaps of livelihood. Is it not time for earnest men to be honest? And many are longing to be honest, if only their way was clear.

And what an incalculable boon would then come to the world! I am convinced that honesty in this matter on the part of ministers would speedily issue in a mighty revival. For what is it that mainly keeps so many men, especially working men, from the Church? There may be many causes; but one undoubtedly is, an undefined idea that there is no eternal torment, and that ministers know it, but are not candid enough to say so. These men may not have studied the theology of the case, but they cannot think of God—when they think of Him at all—as casting innumerable people, and pretty good people—into everlasting fire. They have an idea that that doctrine is in the orthodox creed; and so many have an impression that the whole system of religion is a melancholy farce. But give them a man who has the common feelings of humanity like themselves, and interprets the true God to them as a God of love—and their whole attitude will be changed. I am convinced that nothing would have such a wide and gracious effect, as honesty on this question of future punishment.

I see that a notable Presbyterian divine has been giving a course of lectures on The Church and Men. For one thing, he seeks to account for the fact that working men do not attend church. After glancing at the progress of science, and the effect of the higher criticism, he says: "It is alleged that the church has sometimes alienated thoughtful men by her adherence to outworn creeds." The lecturer, however, makes but little of this as a real cause of working men not allying themselves with the church. I think it is along this line, however, but deeper, that the chief cause may be found. The church has, indeed, "adhered to outworn creeds" in her confessions. The dogma of reprobation, and a limited atonement, and everlasting fire, are retained. But are they preached? Are they believed?

Not long ago, in a large evangelical congregation, the preacher asked for a show of hands on the part of any who had heard a sermon on hell for the last ten years. Two hands were held up. Was that doctrine proclaimed last Sunday in any evangelical church? Was it proclaimed for a year past, or ten years past? I doubt it. But if it is believed, would it not be preached—yes, preached morning, noon, and night, with the earnestness of frenzy?

Some preachers delicately approach the idea with hints and innuendos and mild threatenings, which are really worse than utter silence. I heard a preacher speaking lately of men as "utter failures, going out into the darkness." Now, what did he mean, or did he mean anything? Again: preachers speak of "eternal death," which might mean eternal extinction, or eternal fire. And yet that vague phrase is actually proposed as one of the bases of union of the churches.

Now, how can we expect such jugglery of sacred things to commend itself to honest, hard-headed men? For such is really the character of many of the working men. They love truth, and honesty, and consistency, and abhor everything like sneaking, unmanly pietism? Give them the manliness of truth and honesty, and I venture to think they will not be so shy of the church.

Of course, that might involve the repeal of much of our creed. And there's the rub. We are afraid of pains and penalties. And then we don't like to go back on the fathers who made the creed. It looks like a reflection on their wisdom and piety. But I don't think it really is. They were faithful to their light. And they had to contend with evil traditions. It is not to be expected that any creed they could frame would be good for all time. Besides, we should not be afraid to go back on anything or anybody that is not true. Truth is too sacred for that. And our responsibility is too serious. 'Carlyle has a most scathing warning for all who strive to believe that which in their inmost soul they repudiate.

If it is thought that I am in any degree uncharitable towards ministers of so-called orthodoxy, let me here transcribe a few words from a highly honored preacher of the opposite trend of thought. I have just met with these brave and candid words. They were spoken some time after I had expressed my own views regarding the want of courage and honesty on the part of so-called orthodox preachers. If anyone is disposed to think my own words too strong, let him listen to this from an old and honored minister, but one who repudiates the doctrine of eternal torment.

He says: "It matters not that all the educated ministry to-day well know, and would not for a moment deny, their disbelief in the doctrine of eternal torment, if cross-questioned. Nevertheless, many of them hate us and oppose us, because we show the people the true interpretations of God's Word, and lift before the eyes of their understanding a God of Love, Just, Merciful, Righteous altogether, and fully

capable both in wisdom and power to work out all the glorious designs which He 'purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world.'

"(1) They perceive that the doctrines of Purgatory and eternal torment have not had a sanctifying influence upon mankind in all the sixteen centuries in which they have been preached. They fear that to deny these doctrines now would make bad matter worse. They fear that if the Gospel of the Love of God and of the Bible—that it does not teach eternal torment for any—were made generally known, the effect upon the world would be to increase its wickedness, to make life and property less secure than now, and to fill the world still more than now with blasphemies.

"(2) They fear also that a certain amount of discredit would come to themselves because, knowing that the Bible does not teach eternal torment according to the Hebrew and Greek original, they secreted the knowledge from the people. They fear that this would forever discredit them with their hearers. Hence, they still outwardly lend their influence to the doctrine of eternal torture, which they do not believe, and feel angry with us because we teach the people the Truth upon the subject, which they know will bring to them hundreds of questions difficult to answer or dodge."

But it is not often that orthodox ministers emphatically present the horrors in which they profess to believe. Take, for instance, Dr. Torrey. In a late sermon, when warning sinners, he is reported to have said: "You will go out into eternity disgraced forever." Is that all? Only disgraced? Why does he not present the horrors of eternal fire in which he professes to believe?

Another minister, whom I know, spoke lately of wicked men as "going out into the darkness, miserable failures." Such trimming fails to command the respect of sensible, honest men.

Those who hold the larger view have no need for such evasions. I have just had a letter from one of the most eminent English theologians, in which he states his view thus:

"With regard to the future world, my faith and doctrine have always been that the state of anyone entering the next world is tested and determined by his relation to Christ, Whom he will then see in the fullness of all His redeeming power and glory. If he then seek by a touch to lay hold of Him, he is in Christ's Hand. If he should even then turn from Christ, he will enter into a new condition, but that condition is only an age-long condition, and he is not there fore outside the redeeming love of God; but at the end of the new age will enter upon a new state."

I have pointed out to him that, in my view, the condition he refers to may not necessarily be age-long condition, but that in certain cases it may be very brief. The case of Saul and others seem to favor this view. In any case, he endorses my main contention—that suffering is not endless. The same mail brought me also a letter from another notable English divine, in which he says candidly that he does not believe in endless suffering, and that this is common sense.

I remember well that as a child I was confused by the following problem. My saintly old minister often prayed that the earth might be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. That was all very well for those who would savingly know the Lord. But what about the uncounted millions in the past and the millions now, and the millions yet to be born, who would go out of this world in darkness, without knowing the Lord. The minister never said a word about that. His creed required him to believe that they would all go into endless torment; but he passed over the momentous question in silence.

Possibly he would say that the matter was not a proper one to be spoken of. But why not? If there is such a fearful possibility for anyone, why should he not be warned? The very warning might be the means of averting such a fate. Surely, the most lurid picture of eternal woe would be better than the realization of it. Yet it was seldom or never spoken of, especially as to its duration.

Here, then, is a most serious consideration. If we can think of God doing a thing, the horror of which we cannot bear to speak of, or even to think of, is there not in this a strong presumption that the theory is not true? Let this thought revolve for a while through your mind; remember the strong affinity which the mind has for truth; and then see if the thought which I am trying here to sustain is not a reasonable one. Surely, we have here a strong argument against the theory of endless torment.

There was lately a great Missionary Conference in Edinburgh. Amongst other matters, all sorts of expedients were discussed as to how the heathen of different countries could be most successfully reached. Certain doctrines of Christianity were recognized as best fitting to be presented to certain countries, as especially suited to meet the special conditions that prevail. Strange to say, so far as I saw any report, the doctrine of everlasting punishment was not once suggested as being especially appropriate. Yet if it is true, what could be more appropriate to the heathen mind of all countries? Is it really believed by Missionaries, and those who support them? If it is, why not present it? If it is not,

why not expunge it from our stated confession of faith? Can we not afford to be honest on this supremely sacred question? When an intelligent heathen is converted to the Christian faith, and realizes that we profess to believe what we do not really believe, what will he think of us? Will not the Christian church lose more than it gains by this worldly wisdom, which essentially is moral cowardice?

A devout use of the imagination is of great service here. Yes, I say the imagination. I do not mean the revelling of mere fancy in the realm of the unthinkable or the impossible. I mean the vivid realization of facts that lie outside the ordinary rut of thought. So exercised, imagination is one of our noblest powers.

We need a devout, yet chastened, imagination in dealing with such themes as the one we are considering now. No wonder that Ruskin says that imagination is the greatest power of the soul. It is but reasonable to imagine, then, that God has disclosures of love, and wisdom, and power, to make in the next life, that far transcend our present thought.

II.

CRUELTY OF FORMER VIEWS.

Unconditional Election—Children of Believing Parents—An Arrogant Pretension—God's Own Children—The Heathen of All Time—A Baleful Shadow—Former Cruelty—Herbert Spencer—Dr. Farrar's Eternal Hope—A Lady With an Open Mind—Dr. Dawson's Larger View.—The Universal Attraction.

The old doctrine of God's unconditional decrees still survives, despite our conviction that perfect impartiality is one of the attributes of the divine character. The idea seems to have taken hold of some minds that a thing is right because God is the Author of it. That is certainly beginning at the wrong end. God does a thing because it is right; His doing of it does not make it right. But we need to have faith that His future administration will rectify all the apparent wrongs of the present. It is our failure to take this larger view that has led many people of the kindest heart to adopt the most cruel conclusions.

Just now a lady has told me of a certain "eminent divine" who says that children who die in infancy are elected if they are the children of believing parents! What a revelation this "eminent divine" must have of the eternal mysteries! Since he knows so much, I would like to ask if one believing parent would not suffice, in an urgent case, or if both must infallibly be believers! A more arrogant pretension it would be difficult to conceive.

The lady who spoke to me on the subject said it would be a very comfortable thing to believe. "Yes," I said, "it might be a comfortable thing for you, but what about the other woman down street who is not a believer? Do you think that her children are not as precious in God's sight as yours?"

Away with all such hard, narrowing conceptions! Can it be imagined that God would consign infants to everlasting torment, simply because they are children of unbelieving parents? A thousand times No! Let us remember that they are His own children, whatever earthly parentage they may have. His love and power are not going to be thwarted by any considerations of evil ancestry. Any lingering doubt of that is a survival of the old, narrow, hard doctrine of absolute election.

But in support of the idea referred to, this passage may be quoted: "The promise is to you and to your children." Does not that exclude all others? Well, let us see. Read on. "And to all that are afar off." Ah! That immensely widens the circle. "All that are afar off." Who are they? Are they not the heathen of all the world, and of all time? So the children of believing parents are bound up in the same bundle with the vilest of mankind. And we are not greatly surprised. For they are God's own children, every one; and whether they are little innocent infants or others advanced in some stages of wickedness, or the most depraved of mankind, we believe they are all subject to redeeming power and grace. Different means may be required for their education or reclamation; but it is easy to believe that divine love, and power, and wisdom, will not fail of their effect.

But, then, something more is added in the passage we have quoted. "Even to as many as the Lord our God shall call." Does not that look like restriction, or selection? Well let us see. Who are they that are called? Here we have it, Listen. "Look unto me, and be saved, all the ends of the earth." Surely, that

means the whole race. And equally it means the next life as well as the present; for there are millions and millions who never heard the call, and never will hear it, on this side of time.

We hope we are now leaving behind us the ferocity which was formerly considered quite appropriate to religion. Indeed, a man was hardly accounted serious, if he was not severe. And the worst of it was, that God was considered severe. Men could read over and over again that "God is love;" but somehow the great truth was not received in its fulness. The idea of God's justice seems to have cast a baleful shadow over men's hearts and lives. Certainly heaven's own light is now breaking through the gloom. Many of the highest judgment and character now entertain views which their fathers would have repudiated as rank heresy.

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It is a most unfortunate thing that we have derived from our bloodthirsty ancestors an impression of divine cruelty that is utterly opposed to the fact. And it is not so very long ago that such traditions were handed down to us. "What we forget," says the New York Evening Post, "is the short distance of time and space that separates us from our ferocious forefathers." Dr. Johnson in his 'Journey to the Western Islands,' relates the tradition that the Macdonalds—honored name to-day—surrounded the Culloden Church on Sunday, fastened the doors, and burnt the congregation alive. The entertainment received its perfecting touch when the Macdonald piper mocked the shrieks of the perishing crowd with the notes of his bagpipes.

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"Perhaps an even more striking illustration of the survival of savagery may be found in men's religious beliefs—say, in the conception of a God who is a cruel man endowed with omnipotence. Grave divines were telling us within a generation that a just and merciful Father, for his good pleasure, had doomed certain of the non-elect to the most hideous physical tortures for all eternity. It was in 1879, about thirty years ago, that Herbert Spencer in 'The Data of Ethics,' stated the theory quite nakedly: The belief that the sight of suffering is pleasing to the gods,' He added: 'Derived from bloodthirsty ancestors, such gods are naturally conceived as gratified by the infliction of pain; when living they delighted in torturing other beings; and witnessing torture is supposed still to give them delight. The implied conceptions long survive.'

"Some of our readers may recall the attacks upon Spencer, and even upon clergymen otherwise orthodox, like the late Frederick William Farrar, who doubted the doctrine of eternal torture."

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We hope we are beginning to survive such false and horrible ideas. Those ferocious representations are the very contrary of the truth. To get the truest conceptions of God, we have to think of man at his highest; and even then we are as far below the reality as the earth is below the stars. We are made in the image of God, however, and are a human transcript of the divine. But we are finite at our best, while God is infinite. Beyond all human thought His love is strong, and tender, and unchangeable. He is veritably our Father, and I think He is so in a far closer relation than mere creation. If we can think of the possibility of delight in torturing our children, ten thousand times more repugnance would God have in torturing us, except for a time, and for the highest and wisest ends.

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If we go back to medieval times we have the most revolting pictures of the agonies of hell. We are told, for instance, of a certain monk who in the course of his journeys came to the underworld, and there he found "a fiery glen 'darkened with the mists of death,' and covered with a great lid, hotter than the fires themselves. On the lid sat a huge multitude of souls, burning, 'till they were melted, like garlic in a pan with the glow thereof.' Reaching the nethermost hell, he was shown the Prince of Darkness, black as a raven from head to foot, thousand-handed and with a long thick tail covered with fiery spikes, 'lying on an iron hurdle over fiery gledes, a bellows on each side of him, and a crowd of demons blowing it.'

"As he lay there roasting, tossing from side to side, filled with rage and fury, he grasped the souls in his rough, thick hands, bruising and crushing them, as a man would crush grapes to squeeze out the wine. With his fiery, stinking breath, he scattered the souls about Hell, and as he drew in his breath again he swallowed them down with it, and those whom his hands could not reach he lashed with his tail. This, the angel explained, was Lucifer."

Unfortunately, however, medieval ages had no monopoly of such horrors. They have survived almost to our time. In some cases they are reproduced even yet. It is a painful thing to recall, but even our late beloved

Spurgeon at times fell into this snare.

I have just had an interview with a lady of the highest Christian character. She was brought up in the orthodox faith, and never doubted its truth. I hesitated to launch these larger views upon her, thinking they might only disturb her, and that perhaps she was too old to recast her opinions. But I found that her mind was perfectly open; and after some discussion she firmly believed in the larger hope. I was persuaded that such would be the experience of thousands more, if they would but give their heart and mind to a devout consideration of these questions. And oh, what a pall of gloom would thus be lifted from the heart of the world!

We may well give here the noble words of Dr. Dawson, who in an address before the Royal Society of Canada, quoted this stanza:

"For a day, and a night, and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span,
With travail, and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man."

Then he says: "The holy spirit of man! Holy in its capacity, in its possibility: nay, more, in its ultimate destiny!"

This is no self-righteousness. It is a gleam of man's potentiality, that makes him truly sublime. There are many Scripture statements that make man pitifully little; but this is because of his present sinful condition. Bye and bye he will rise into his true condition, and then "The holy spirit of man" will be not only a possibility, but an experience. It is gratifying to notice that such a man as Dr. Dawson has this larger hope.

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In striking antithesis to such views as we have referred to, I may here narrate an experience of my own in which I think there was revealed to me a peculiar phase of Christ's universal attractive power. One day in San Francisco I saw a funeral procession passing along the street. I joined the procession, and went with it into the church. I saw that all the company were negroes. The minister, who was also a negro, announced the Hymn:

"Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o'ershaded,
Sweetly my soul shall rest."

It was sung with all the fervor of the negro race. As it proceeded a strange thought struck me: How could negroes find rest on the bosom of One quite another color? It was a natural thought, for the color prejudice is strong. Even when we think of Christ, we instinctively think of Him as a white man. How, then, could these worshippers find rest on His bosom, and in His arms? If He had been a negro, they might do so; but how could they do such a thing when they realized that He was of a different color from themselves?

Then suddenly, a solution came to my mind. If Christ was not black, neither was He white. In fact He was brown; about midway between white and black. So in color He was as near to the negroes as to the white race. Therefore the negroes can recline on His breast, and in His arms, as naturally as we. That seemed to me a very happy idea; perhaps even a revelation.

But then, another thought quickly followed. What if Christ took this central place, even as to color, of set purpose? He could thus appeal more directly to the whole human race, and thus more effectively draw all men to Himself. Therefore I hazard the conjecture that one reason why He chose to come of the Jewish race was, that he might be, even as to color, the central attraction of the world. Oh yes; if we only widen the horizon of our thought and our affection, we shall see that the great scheme of redemption is co-extensive with the race, and reaches forward into the eternities.

III.

No Definite note of Warning—Preachers Afraid of Discipline—Divided as to Restoration or Extinction—Plea of Liberty—Liberalism of the Episcopal Church—Advance in Christian Unity—Dr. Edward White—Conditional Immortality—Endless Torment—If True Ought to Be Preached Morning, Noon and Night—Awful Penalty of Sin—Extinction—True Religion is Reasonable—Enlarged Conceptions.

There can hardly be a doubt that the church in general is in a state of transition on this question. The want of a definite note of warning, to which I have referred elsewhere, is an indication of it. Some preachers have not the conviction of eternal torment and do not speak of it. Others know very well that many of their hearers would resent any such declaration. But they do not preach Restoration. They are afraid, I suppose, that they might expose themselves to the discipline of the church. Some, I believe, would very quickly espouse the Restoration theory, if they were sure that they would escape all pains and penalties. Meantime they do not examine the doctrine, for I suspect they fear they would be convinced that it is true. I believe that most ministers of the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches occupy one or other of the positions I have indicated.

A few days ago I was speaking with a mature and scholarly man who occupies a prominent position in the Methodist Church. In our conversation we drifted into the subject of Restoration, and he freely avowed his faith in it; but he said that if such a thing were known, he would lose his position.

In the Presbyterian Church there is by no means a universal loyalty to the traditional doctrine of eternal torment. There was a notable indication of this some time ago. Somehow—I do not know how—the question of eternal punishment came up among Presbyterians in the United States. A great number of letters was addressed to "*The Interior*," of Chicago. Some of these endorsed the doctrine of Extinction, and the others of Restoration. So far as I can remember, none were in favor of eternal punishment. At the close, the Editor summed up in favor of extinction. But he was not indicted for heresy, nor any of his correspondents, so far as I am aware.

The whole affair showed very clearly that there is a tacit and wide repudiation of the doctrine of eternal torment. It also showed that the church is divided on the theories of restoration and extinction; while I presume that many would uphold the old doctrine of torment. I claim that this division of opinion is allowable. There ought to be, and I think that on the whole there is, Christian liberty on this topic. Some day the church may see eye to eye on these matters.

Especially do I honor the Episcopal Church for always having taken this more liberal ground. It is possible to hold the most diverse views on this point, and yet be in good standing in that communion. I lately spoke with an Episcopal clergyman who believes not only in the Restoration of the entire human race, but who believes that Satan himself will ultimately be restored. I know another Episcopal clergyman who is a confirmed and advanced spiritualist; yet he believes in Restoration; and he is a very able, devout, and godly man. Witness also Archdeacon Farrar's book on "Eternal Hope;" yet that man held his position in the church, and grew in public esteem till his dying day.

OPENING OF THE PULPITS.

And there was lately a remarkable expression of Christian charity on the part of the Episcopal Church in the United States. At a triennial convention of that body held at Richmond, there was passed a resolution opening the pulpits of the Episcopal Church to clergymen of other denominations. The resolution was then referred to the House of Bishops, which passed it by a vote that was practically unanimous.

This is a marvellous advance in Christian unity, and a tacit recognition of the secondary nature of many questions that were once thought to be of primary importance. Amongst other topics, there may well be a difference of opinion on matters pertaining to the next life.

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And I believe that the Methodist Church is really, though not avowedly, in a state of transition on the same point. I was speaking a short time ago with a noted official of that church, and one that has a wide and intimate acquaintance with the views of his brethren. He said to me, very candidly, that the ministers of the Methodist Church do not believe in eternal punishment; and he said this with such an air of satisfaction that I concluded that he himself took that position.

As for the Congregational Church, it makes no pretense of exacting such a view on the part of its ministers. Some of its ministers and members uphold that theory; but there is perfect liberty of opinion. I know that many of their ministers believe in Conditional Immortality. Dr. Edward White, of England, the apostle of that doctrine, was a highly respected minister of that church.

I think I am right in saying that there is no Universalist Church in England. There Universalism is no barrier to membership in the Congregational Church.

At all events, in either of the four churches named, there is little or no preaching of eternal torment. That is the outstanding fact. We can account for the fact only on the supposition that the doctrine is not believed. If it were really believed it would certainly be preached. If it is true it ought to be preached, morning, noon and night. One cannot conceive of believing in hell fire as the doom of sinners, and not warning men of it, even with the earnestness of frenzy.

THERE IS NO WARNING.

And here I would notice the great loss we sustain in having no emphatic note of warning. It used to be the custom of warning men of hell fire; but now there is no warning, except the very general and vague warning of wrath to come, which has really little meaning. We do not say in what it consists; therefore the vague statement has but slight significance. To this may be attributed much of the comfort and carelessness of sinners. Many there are, even of regular church goers, who hear nothing on these matters but what they hear from the pulpit; and from that they hear practically nothing. How much better it would be if they could be warned very definitely of coming suffering, if they are not now delivered from their sins. So long as there is sin there will be suffering. I am convinced that the nerve of the preacher's message is often cut by this want of a definite note of warning.

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Let it be clearly noted that punishment is a large factor in the theory of Restoration. Let no one suppose that the transition from sin to holiness is an easy matter under any circumstances. There are multitudes of men that go out of life so utterly wicked that they must suffer terribly, and perhaps suffer long, before they are reformed. At least we may suppose such to be the rule. There may be exceptions, like that of Saul, to which we shall refer later. Sin unforgiven will pursue a man into the next life, and exact a fearful penalty. The prodigal must eat of the husks before he comes back to the Father.

A VITAL PHASE.

Here, then, is the point of agreement. Suffering is entailed by Sin. Whatever view we espouse, that fact remains. It was mainly to emphasize that fact that we entered on this discussion. It is one phase of the agreement, and a vital one, between the Christian churches. While there is much diversity of view as to the mode and the object and the duration of suffering, there is a broad basis of agreement as to the fact.

Not only, therefore, does the doctrine of eternal punishment recognize suffering as the effect of sin, but so does the doctrine of extinction. To be eternally put out of being, and so precluded forever from eternal happiness, is punishment beyond the power of the mind to conceive. As we cannot conceive of the felicity of eternal joy, so we cannot conceive of the loss of it.

It is a matter of no great moment to others how I myself stand on this great question, except for the reasons which I think support it. I am by no means dogmatic on the subject, for the reason, as stated before, that revelation does not seem to give a clear and direct deliverance on it. But I do think that there are much clearer and more emphatic Scriptural statements in favor of the doctrine of Restoration than any of the alternate theories.

I think, moreover, that reason is clearly in favor of it, so far as reason will carry us. And I believe what an eminent minister said lately: "We ought to make our faith reasonable to reasonable minds."

The fact is, that all true religion is reasonable, and we would see it to be so if we could see the truth in all its relations. But our views are limited; that is the trouble. Hence there are many topics that we shall not fully understand in this life; but "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

It will be seen also that details are not only unrevealed but also that they could not possibly be revealed. The main fact only can be the subject of investigation. Faith can wait for the revelation of the mode and the time.

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I see that our friends of the Watch Tower are predicting a time of trouble such as the world has never seen; and it is to begin, they say, in about seven years. On the contrary, in an article just to hand, there

is a most optimistic outlook for the uplift of society. The writer says: "It is but little more than a century ago that the church awoke to the fulness of the truth that God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth." Then he goes on to forecast the reign of kindness, and good will and righteousness.

I make the quotation to show how easily, yet with what limitations, we fall into the generally expressed view that God "would have all men to be saved," while really ignoring the fact. For the writer evidently refers to the time when the church awoke to the necessity of missions; and he evidently thinks that our feeble efforts in that direction prove in a general way that God "would have all men to be saved." He takes no note of the millions and millions that have passed away without so much as hearing the joyful sound. And he is equally oblivious to the fact that millions who are living now, and other millions yet to come, will never hear the Gospel in this life. Are not these some of the "all men" whom God would save? Does it matter to Him whether they are in this world or the next? Has any one of them gone beyond the sphere of His love? We must enlarge our conception of God's own words and thoughts; they are as high as heaven is high above the earth.

I have just received a circular from a pastor of a certain congregation. It is an appeal on behalf of missions. It asks if this scheme of the church is a failure; and if not, why it is not supported. Then it goes on to say that the churches have been assessed in certain amounts, and that this particular church is far behind in raising its share. Each member is then urged to pay up.

But not a word of incentive is given. We are not told what the heathen are to be saved from, or what they are to be saved to. Surely we would like to know if they are going straight to everlasting fire if they are not converted. That is the doctrine of the church; but it does not seem expedient to express it. Why? Because it is not believed. If it were believed would there not be plenty of funds to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth? So we hang on in theory to the doctrine of eternal torment; but we do not dare, nor are we inclined, to express it. Surely it is time for a change; yes, a change to honesty and candor. If we are undecided, let us say so; the truth will prevail in due time. It is "to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness."

Nor, as I have said, does the circular give a hint or hope of what the heathen are to be saved to. There is no suggestion of "glory, honor, and immortality." Is not this altogether too vague a way of extorting money? But let it be made clear that by our efforts the worst of the heathen will be put in the way of salvation, and in many cases of possession of it, and I think there would be no lack of funds. Let it be shown that whatever there is of future suffering is on account of sin, and that it is a divine preparation for eternal joy, and the most hardened and selfish will have a worthy appeal to their liberality.

For notwithstanding all hardness and selfishness, there is deep down in the human heart a feeling of wonderful kindness for our own kith and kin. Witness the heroic efforts that are willingly made to save a fellow creature from danger or death. See the agony that is endured by the most selfish when every effort seems fruitless. Yes; we see this very plainly in the case of temporal danger or death. Would not we see the same solicitude multiplied a thousand fold if it were realized that the issues involved are eternal?

When we get to that point where these great issues can be presented as real facts, and not merely as half believed theories, I believe there would be no difficulty in raising funds for missions. And surely, it will not then be a matter of assessment, but of free will. May the glorious day be hastened!

IV.

INFINITE JUSTICE.

A Strong Argument—Universal Atonement—Infinite Justice Satisfied—A Candid Methodist Minister—Can Man Commit an Infinite Sin—Everlasting Punishment Could Never Be Endured—Uses of Suffering—Punitive and Remedial—The Penalty has Been Paid—Moral Effect—Mystery of Pain—Not Punishment but Chastening—Extending Our Outlook Beyond—Boundless Space and Time—Operation of Grace in the Next Life—Infinite Power—Infinite Mercy—Infinite Love—Incentive to Endless Praise.

It may be said that in this argument I am not taking sufficient account of divine justice. That may be so. The fact is, that the relation of justice to the idea of universal salvation was one of the last ideas on this subject that came to my mind. But now it seems to me that in the idea of divine justice is involved one of the strongest arguments for universal salvation.

Look at the matter simply and candidly. Did not Christ die for every soul of man? All theological subtleties aside, we joyfully believe that He did. The fact is stated over and over again in Scripture, with the utmost plainness; and it is assumed in a multitude of other passages. So clearly has this come to be recognized that the American Presbyterian Church formally adopted it, and put it in their "Brief Statement" some years ago. It is also proposed for acceptance in the creed of the united churches of Canada, if that union is consummated. And despite all theories to the contrary, it is believed and preached in most if not all Evangelical Churches.

Very well. Consider what is involved in that article of our faith. If Christ really died for all, does not justice require that all will be saved! If Christ paid the debt for every sinner, will not every sinner be redeemed? How else could infinite justice be satisfied? I wish our Methodist brethren would consider this matter well. All honor to the Methodist Church for its noble testimony to the universality of the atonement. But does not universal atonement imply universal salvation? If we may speak of such things in the language of mathematics may we not say that universal salvation is the corollary of universal atonement? To this conclusion it does seem to me that we are inevitably led.

I was speaking lately to a Methodist minister of a very acute but candid mind. He put the matter in this way: Either Christ made an atonement for each one, or He did not. Did He not actually bear upon His heart the sins of the whole world? And if the whole world, then surely each one singly, so that every child of humanity may truthfully say with Paul, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Does not justice then demand that each one will be saved? In our present limited outlook there may be a difficulty as to how and where; but the glorious fact seems to be beyond question.

This matter is so important that I would try to make it plain from my own point of view, even if that involves some degree of repetition.

I raise the question elsewhere: Can man commit an infinite sin? Some say he can, because his sin is against God, a Being of infinite purity. If his sin then is of this infinite nature, infinite justice may demand that he suffer an infinite punishment. But being a finite being, he cannot suffer infinite punishment in quality. Therefore it is said, he must suffer it in duration. Hence the necessity of everlasting punishment. That is the argument.

But the main premise is by no means clear. It may well be doubted if man can commit an infinite sin. First; he is a finite being; and can a finite being do an infinite wrong? Further; he cannot suffer everlasting punishment. For everlasting has no end. He would never have rendered a due equivalent for his sin. When he would have suffered millions and millions of years he would be as far from rendering a due equivalent as at the beginning. Thus the demands of God's law would never be satisfied.

We have therefore to confront the idea of God inflicting a punishment that could never be rendered. In that case might not God suspend all punishment at once? For when man shall have suffered for aeons and aeons untold he would really be as far from the end as he is now. Could you think of the Infinitely Wise and Holy One pronouncing a sentence that could never be executed? Then add to the idea of Infinite Holiness and Infinite Wisdom, the idea of Infinite Power and Infinite Love, and I think you will find yourself involved in a series of contradictions which you will be glad to see dissolved as an ugly dream.

But now, supposing that man, not being infinite in his nature, cannot commit an infinite sin, is it not reasonable to think that a less punishment than an infinite one would suffice even eternal justice? Suppose, for instance, that God had cut off the first human pair when they sinned, and thus have prevented this hideous tale of mourning, lamentation, and woe, would not that suffice? For us to be debarred forever from existence and consciousness—would not that suffice? Well; the Infinite One had that alternative. But He did not resort to it. Would He not have resorted to it if He foresaw that His choice lay between eternal extinction and eternal fire, for the great majority of our race? Would the eternal joy to which He foresaw that a few of the race would attain, compensate for the eternal woe which He foresaw would be the fate of the great majority? A thousand times No. The fact that we, with our poor, limited powers, can see that there was a way of averting unutterable and everlasting woe from even one soul, is a strong argument that there is no everlasting woe. Let us beware of imputing to God that which we can see might have been honorably avoided, and that which we would shrink in horror from doing ourselves! Think this matter over seriously, and see where it will land you.

But then, what is the use of suffering at all? Surely, God foresaw that there would be a great deal of

temporary suffering in this world. Why did He not prevent it?

Well; having disposed of the idea of eternal suffering, it remains for us to see the place and use of that which is temporary only. But here, an entirely new principle comes into view. Eternal suffering is supposed to be a vindication of justice. It could be nothing else; amendment of character is entirely out of the question. But temporary suffering is a means of reformation. Eternal suffering has no regard to reformation; it would issue in the very opposite. Evil would be intensified, and intensified forever, which is unthinkable; and still more is it unthinkable in a universe governed by a God of Wisdom and Holiness. But temporary suffering is a means for the development of character.

Here our ideas are thrown upon the twofold province of suffering. It is punitive, and it is reformatory. When we inflict it on an offender it partakes of both qualities; and sometimes it is hard to say which predominates. But more and more are we rising to the idea that punishment is mainly or wholly reformatory. Strong testimony is borne to that fact by determinate sentence. It is recognized that in all justice a man need not suffer a full equivalent for his crime. No matter what his crime has been, when there is good evidence that he has reformed, he is set free. It is felt that suffering has then achieved its highest end. In nothing that I know of is there such evidence of the upward trend of the race.

Now in God's infliction of suffering these two principles come clearly into view. What Christ suffered is mainly punitive; what we suffer is reformatory. The matter may be clearer if we glance at these two things separately.

I have said that Christ's suffering was mainly punitive. Look at some statements of Scripture concerning it, and you will see that it was chiefly of that quality. It is said that "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." That is, He took our place so intimately that He actually bore the punishment due to us. In another place it is said that "He was made a curse for us." The curse that was originally intended for us alighted upon Him. It is said that "He is the propitiation for our sins." It is said that "Christ died for us." It is said that we are "justified by His blood." It is said that "by the obedience of One"—that is obedience unto death, "shall many be made righteous." These are only a few of many passages of similar import.

I do not overlook the fact that Christ's life and death had a moral effect as well. Certainly His life and death are the greatest example in the world; and that example has done far more to uplift the character of the world than any force brought to bear upon mankind. At the same time, the supreme meaning of His suffering is that it was punitive. He actually bore the curse for us. And we have the glorious fact repeated again and again that He did it for every soul of man. He really "satisfied divine justice."

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Then what further claim can God rightfully make in the way of punishment? The penalty has been paid. Does God require it paid over again? He is a just God. He claims but one payment of the penalty. To my mind, that fact does away with all possibility of eternal punishment. For all other suffering that God inflicts is entirely reformatory. Whether that suffering be inflicted in this life or the life to come, the principle is the same; it is all reformatory. It may come, and often does come, as the result of sin. In the providence of God sin and suffering are closely linked together.

Wherever there is sin there is bound to be suffering, whether in this life or in the next. That has been paid in full. Christ paid the penalty for the whole race.

Whether God might have ordained some other alternative than suffering as a means of our purification, is not the point. The fact that He has ordained suffering is proof enough that it is a good appointment. I have hinted elsewhere that suffering may be a means of safeguarding us against sin to all eternity.. But this idea is advanced only as a possible solution of the mystery of pain. We go upon surer ground when we recognize suffering as one means that God has appointed for our purification. It does not come to us, or to any soul of man, as a penalty. The penalty has been paid.

But it may be said that God is angry with sin. How can He be angry with sin if the sin is actually forgiven? I answer that it is His very nature to be angry with sin, though it is forgiven. It is in opposition to His nature and His law. It is also in opposition to that development of character which He has designed for all His children. Anything which conflicts with that, excites His indignation. Hence the pains and penalties which follow in the track of sin, though the sin itself may be forgiven. When we consider that a person may be very angry with himself because of sin, though he knows that the sin is forgiven, we can understand something of the same feeling on the part of God.

God does visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children. But is the suffering thus inflicted to be regarded as the penalty due to sin? No.

There is an amended verse in one of our old hymns in which the view seems to be taken, and I think

rightly, that the atonement is not only the basis on which pardon can be righteously vouchsafed, but the very certainty of its being vouchsafed. The stanza is this:

"But never shall my soul despair
Thy pardon to secure,
Who knows Thine only Son has died
To make my pardon sure."

The whole matter of suffering is dealt with at length in the twelfth chapter of The Hebrews. Over and over again it is described as chastening. It is not penalty. The penalty has been paid. Suffering henceforth is Fatherly chastisement. And the intention and effect of chastisement are clearly intimated. It is said that we are not to despise the chastening of the Lord; for that He chastises us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Again it is said that chastening afterwards yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. That is the idea exactly. There is no word of punishment. The punishment has been endured in the sacrifice of Christ; and it is now clearly recognized that His sacrifice was offered on behalf of the whole world. But the necessity for chastisement remains. It is one means of our spiritual development, and but for the necessity for it, it would never be inflicted. Hence Jeremiah could say, "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men."

An example may make this clearer. Take the case of Manasseh. He was one of the worst kings of Judah. It is recorded of him that "he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord;" that "he made his children to pass through the fire;" that he "made Judah and Jerusalem to do worse than the heathen;" that he "shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to the other." But he repented. We read that "when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication."

Yes; but we read that "notwithstanding the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal."

Now there we have an example of the fact that a whole people was ordained to suffering in consequence of the evil wrought by one man. Such suffering cannot be penal, for we are told very plainly that it was due to the wickedness of one person; and even he had repented and was forgiven. In that case there was no room for penalty. It would be entirely out of place. But there was room for discipline. The monstrous evil that Manasseh had wrought would in part survive, notwithstanding his personal reformation. So the suffering could not be penalty; but it could be chastisement. There might be "the fierceness of great wrath," as we read there was; but there was love behind. The people might not have the spiritual discernment to see their suffering in that light; but we have a clearer revelation than they had; so we read that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

Even now we witness the sad spectacle of God's own people—the very people to whom we have been referring—being made a byword and a hissing among the nations. And wherefore? Because of sin? Certainly. But not as a punishment for sin, but as a necessary means of reformation. A superficial view of the case may deem it punishment; but a deeper view recognizes it as chastisement. The fundamental fact is, that Christ bore their sin, and all sin, "in His own body on the tree." Surely, justice will say that it has not to be borne again. Hence, all suffering that is now inflicted, is not inflicted as a punishment, but as a discipline. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Then, "he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." That glorious fact should settle all difficulty.

Suffering, then, is appointed solely for the uplift of character, both in this life and the next. When it has done its work—and in some cases it may take long—it will cease.

These profound questions require us to extend our outlook into the next life. And nothing can be more truly natural. For with God there is no limit as to time or space. The history of our world, and of our race in this lower life, is but a span in the eternal years.

The trouble has been that men have had no idea of the operation of grace beyond this life. This is no disparagement of the limitations of able and saintly men in the past. We have simply had a growing revelation. It is no credit to us that we have larger views.

We see now that the yearnings of divine love will be satisfied. There is a harmony in this view which commends it at once to our highest conceptions of fitness. God is infinite in His being, and in His perfections. Hence His operations are not limited to the mere span of time. The outgoings of His Wisdom, and power, and love, are from everlasting to everlasting.

In my view, there is nothing that will so effectually break down sin, as a belief that all sin has been

atoned for. That is God's royal way of bestowing favors. But then we need renewal. That may require a shorter or a longer process, but it will come, either in this life or the next. In a multitude of passages in the divine Word we know that God desires this. Not only so, but God has expressed His desire in the gift of His Son. If we had any doubt, surely that might convince us. And I believe it will convince us yet. The doctrine of a universal atonement is now generally accented. Even Calvinists have declared almost unanimously that Christ died for the whole world. And if we had not that declaration in words, we have it even more emphatically in missionary enterprise. Still there is a remnant of the old belief that Christ died only for the sins of the elect. I believe the day is coming when there will be the assured conviction that He died for the sins of the world. Then there will follow the joyous assurance that there is salvation for the world, to be realized either in this life or the next.

We have said that God desires this consummation. He has expressed that desire again and again in His Word. And He has expressed it with infinite emphasis in the gift of His Son. Men, ask yourselves this question: Can any desire of His ultimately fail? Let us never forget that "his counsel will stand, and he will do all His pleasure."

V.

HARMONY OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

Our Limitations—Development—Our Capacity—Divine Foreknowledge—No Divine Failure—The Heathen—Unchangeable Love—Union of Four Attributes—Eternal Wisdom—A Marvel of Coercion and Freedom—The Day of Divine Power—An Unfathomable Mystery—Future Revelations—Coming to Zion with Songs.

Since trying to see the relation of absolute Justice to the Idea of Restoration, it has struck me that it may be well to take a glance at some others of the Divine attributes, and see if they also sustain the same theory. Any theory that is really true must be in harmony with the Divine character. The trouble is, that our knowledge of all that pertains to the Infinite is necessarily limited. At the same time, if it seems that when any quality of the Divine character is contradicted or disparaged by any theory of ours, that is a strong argument that the theory is not true. But if, on the other hand, our theory is seen to glorify the Divine character, that is strong evidence that the theory is right. While well aware, then, of our limitations, in this direction, it is fair to inquire if the Divine attributes, or any of them, appear to sustain our theory.

We have dealt already with the attribute of Justice. Some have regarded that as the fundamental quality of the Divine character. I am not sure that it is so. I think Love and Wisdom are equally fundamental. In a former age the idea of Divine Justice overshadowed all other conceptions of God. But the fact that He is infinite in His being, seems to imply that He is also infinite in His perfections. So we shall give our attention for a little to the qualities of Power, of Wisdom, and of Love, and try to combine them with the idea of Justice, at which we have glanced already.

Take Divine Wisdom. That means that God knows all things. Ponder for a moment what that implies. It means that to the Eternal Mind, every event, whether it be past, present, or future, is as clear as if it were now transpiring. He knows, without any peradventure, everything that will happen throughout all eternity. And He sees every circumstance that will cause every event to transpire. Not only that, but He has the fullest knowledge of the best means to adopt to bring about any desirable end.

Such an idea is altogether too vast and high for us adequately to comprehend. At the same time, it seems to imply certain things that are beyond peradventure. God must have foreseen, for instance, that He would make man. He must have foreseen, too, that man would fall. He foresaw, also, and arranged, the great scheme of Redemption. But He must have known with the utmost certainty that millions and millions of the human race would pass out of this life without once hearing the joyful sound. And because they did not know it, if annihilation or torment is true, He knew that He would utterly extinguish them, or consign them to everlasting fire!

Now, can you think of a Being of Infinite Wisdom doing either? Apart altogether from the idea of Love, could you think of Infinite Wisdom acting in this way? Would you not think it as a most horrid stigma on human wisdom, and infinitely more so on Divine? To think that God made the human race, at the same time knowing well that the vast majority of the race would come to such an end—an end

which they could not foresee nor prevent! Is that the way Infinite Wisdom would act? The idea seems almost blasphemy. Yet that is what you must believe if you accept the idea either of annihilation or of endless torment.

More than that. Consider that the Creator endows every one of the race with mental powers of almost infinite expansion; yea, better still, with moral powers and affections akin to those of the angels. Then consider that in the case of most, these divine powers were to be extinguished, and that the unfortunate beings who had been endowed with them were to pass back into nonentity, or be cast into everlasting torment. In the one case there would be utter abortion; in the other, there would be everlasting development of evil. Could you conceive of anything more unworthy of Eternal Wisdom?

Still more. God foresaw and arranged the great scheme of Redemption. That it was to be available for the whole race was divinely intended. We are told again and again that God gave His Son for the world. It is said that He "tasted death for every man." But God did not take means to apply it to every man in this life. He could easily have done so. He could have sent His angels to proclaim to men the good news of salvation. Such an idea is not so far-fetched as at first sight it may appear. We follow the same principle when we send missionaries to the heathen. Oceans were formerly almost impassable. There is still more or less risk, both from the voyage and the climate and the hostility of savages. We may well suppose that angels could pass more easily from star to star than that man can pass from continent to continent. And all the savagery of evil men could have no effect on angels.

Why, then, did He not send them? He must have foreseen that men would fail in giving the Gospel to the heathen. But was the eternal destiny of the great majority of our race to depend on the whim of men? If God provided salvation for the heathen, would He not convey it to them in some way? Evidently, He has not done so in this life. Do we not begin, then, to see that there must be some other time, or some other means, of effecting His purposes? For "His purpose will stand, and he will do all his pleasure."

And when we consider the eternity of His being, and of our own, nothing is more reasonable than that He has ordained a fitting opportunity beyond the boundary of time. Let us only rid ourselves of our insular, contracted ideas, and we will see how worthy of the Infinite Wisdom is such a scheme of grace.

Then there is another consideration. God loves every soul of man. And every man was endowed with a capacity of worshipping Him, and of having communion with Him to all eternity. If any failed from any cause whatever to rise to this great experience, would not God's own happiness be curtailed?

I know that it has been an orthodox doctrine that God cannot suffer. I have long had my doubts of it. To be sure, we read that He is "without variableness or shadow of turning." Does not that apply to His character? In that respect He is absolutely unchangeable. It is no infringement of that great truth to believe that He can suffer. I spoke of this matter lately to a minister of profound mind. He replied: "I would not think much of Him if He could not suffer."

I have even thought that in the incarnation and death of Christ, the Father suffered equally with the Son. It is a great mystery; I do not press it. But my thought has been that there was such infinite sympathy between them that the Father actually suffered as much as the Son. If a child is sick, does not the mother suffer as much as the child? And do we not all suffer if our children are in pain? Now, we inherit as much of the Divine nature as is possible to be communicated to human nature. The root of such suffering is love. And is not God's love for His children infinitely greater than ours? Therefore, would not His happiness be curtailed by seeing His children in pain? We know that "He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Can He, then, contemplate with changeless equanimity the wickedness and final suffering of the great majority of our race? So far as I know, there is no such idea in Scripture; and it is certainly not suggested by our own human nature in its highest development.

Now, can it be supposed that the sin of puny man will finally impair the happiness of God? It may for a time; but Divine Love will win; God will be all in all. Surely it accords with our highest reason to believe that His happiness will not finally be lessened. There is a manifest and eternal unfitness in such a supposition. The Divine Wisdom that rules in all worlds will surely make it impossible.

Think next of Divine Power. Now with regard to this attribute, there is one thing to be recognized; but it is not self-evident. It is this: that God is omnipotent in the moral realm, as in the physical. This may be disputed. It will be freely granted that in the physical world God has all power. But in the moral sphere, is not even divine power limited by our free will?

Now, I do not intend to go into the metaphysics of the matter. That would perhaps but involve us in deeper mystery. I think the question will be clearer if we take one example. It is that of Saul of Tarsus, on the occasion of his conversion. He was changed in a moment by omnipotent power. So radical was the change that from being "the chief of sinners" he became the chief of saints. Nothing short of

omnipotent power could effect such a change.

But at the same time, was not Saul a free agent? Afterwards, when referring to this wonderful experience, he says: "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." Surely, that implies freedom. Yet while he was free, divine power constrained him. Such a mystery no man can understand.

Could Saul have withstood the change? I reverently say that I do not know. If Paul, in the time of his great inlightenment, had been asked if he could have withstood it, I can imagine that he would have said that he did not know, and did not want to know. Even if he were asked the same question to-day, I can believe that he would still give the same answer.

Such is the mystery of the operation of the Divine Spirit. We are really "made willing in the day of His power." What a wonderful expression that is of the union of divine coercion and human freedom! I doubt if all the metaphysics of the schools will ever get beyond it.

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But now, looking at the matter in this light, what wonderful operations of grace are opened up to our faith! The power that redeemed Saul can surely redeem the worst of mankind, while yet conserving their moral liberty. And surely divine love will incline God to take such action. O yes; Divine Love, and Divine Wisdom, come in here to act in concert with Divine Power. O, the depths of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge—and surely, we may add the Love—of God!

To be sure, it may be asked, "Why does not God put forth such redeeming power in this life?" There may be good reasons why, but we must beware of intruding into divine mysteries. We might as well ask, Why did not God interfere sooner in the case of Saul? When we think of the havoc he was making of the church, and the suffering he was inflicting on God's own saints, we might ask, Why was he permitted to run such an evil course so long? Both questions are of the same order; and we could point to ten thousand more. In all such cases we can but reverently say, "Secret things belong unto the Lord." "Even so. Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

We have already anticipated the general operation of divine Love in the next life. But now let us look at the matter more particularly.

We have always to remember that we are God's own children, not in name only, but in the most real sense. The mere fact that we are transferred to another world, implies only a change of location and of surroundings; possibly a very slight change in locality when we consider the amazing amplitude of creation. Surely, a mere change of locality can make no change in everlasting love! In that thought, if we see no farther, is there not enough to stimulate eternal hope?

But then, think that God has made the Sacrifice of all sacrifices of giving His Son for our salvation. We can never fathom that mystery of Love Divine. Now, if he made this Sacrifice for only a part of mankind, as we formerly taught, we would be constrained to think of His Love as being limited and partial. In that case, we could think it possible that He might consign all the rest of our race to eternal torture with the utmost complacency. But when we realize that He loved the whole of mankind, and that the Sacrifice was made for the whole of mankind, are we not forced to the conclusion that all mankind will be saved?

For that Love is as intense as it is universal. Yes; think of its intensity, as well as its scope. Surely, such Divine Love will attain its end. All the methods that Divine Wisdom sees to be necessary will be used, so that Divine Love will not fail. This looks like the completeness we would expect from Divine plans and purposes. Anything less would seem like a failure of Him who is Eternal Love as well as Eternal Wisdom.

Think over this matter reverently, and I believe you will arrive at the conclusion we are trying to recommend. When we realize that Infinite Love is changeless, and that it is united with Infinite Power, and Infinite Wisdom, as well as with Infinite Justice, we cannot but believe that it will have the victory. O, yes; we believe that the present abnormal conditions will be done away with; that grace will triumph over sin; that suffering will disappear; that all the ransomed of the Lord shall yet come to Zion with songs!

THEORY OF EQUALITY.

Abraham Tucker's View—Ingenious and Reverent—Variety of Endowment—Maximum of Happiness—Imparting and Receiving New Ideas—Compensations—Infinite Justice.

When I was a lad I met with an old book entitled "Equality," by Abraham Tucker. The main idea of the book, so far as I can recollect, was, that as God is infinitely just, He must treat all His creatures with absolute equality. As such a thing is evidently not in force now, the idea was that the future life will exactly rectify all the inequalities of the present, so that upon the whole there will be perfect equality. It was an ingenious and reverent theory; but on turning it over in my mind just now, I find some formidable objections to it.

For one thing, the inequalities that prevail now, when not painful, give us no serious discontent. In fact, except in extreme cases, we rather approve and enjoy them. No doubt we have a love of variety; but apart from that, we rather delight to have superiors and inferiors. It is pleasant to have some one to whom we can look up, as better endowed than ourselves; and it is pleasant to have others who can look up to us. And our best and most ethical judgment approves of this feeling. In particular, there is no feeling so ennobling as reverence; but there would be no proper place for reverence if we were equal. It would not, therefore, be easy to think that an ideal state of society demands equality.

Again: Analogy points decisively the same way. If we look above us we find that there are among the angels, thrones, dominions, principalities and powers. If we look below us, we find a striking variety among the animals. In either case, there is not equality; and so far as we know, no compensations to produce equality. It would be hard to believe that there ever will be such compensations in the case of the human race.

Moreover: The theory of equality in the long run would seem to require that some deteriorate, which is extremely unlikely, in view of the fact that the normal law of God's universe is advancement.

Then, further: We cannot conceive of equality of endowment as producing the maximum of happiness. It is a great joy to impart a new idea; and it is a great joy to receive one. But if all were equal, there could be no joy, either of imparting or receiving; which is contrary to our idea of the highest perfection and blessedness.

Again: It is reasonable to believe that in the future world there will be variety of service, calling for different endowment and capacity to perform it; and if such different equipment is required, we may be sure that it is provided. If that is so, equality cannot be the ideal condition.

Still more: As time is so short, and eternity so long, the least compensation in eternity would infinitely over-balance the greatest inequality in time. From that point of view we could not look for equality, even in the most distant age.

Add to these various considerations the Scriptural intimation that "one star differeth from another star in glory," with all that is intended to be illustrated by that statement; and the idea of equality seems to have no place.

On such grounds as these we believe that there will be forever a variety of endowment and capacity; and that such variety is in full agreement with God's infinite justice.

VII.

PROCESSES OF PURIFICATION.

Different Processes—The Case of Saul—Changed in a Moment—No Violence to Human Freedom—The Case of Nebuchadnezzar—Sudden or Slow—New Illumination—Basis of Warning—An Object Lesson—Function of Suffering.

Here I would advert to the different processes that may be used for man's redemption. We have referred to the case of Saul. His case is a typical one. It illustrates the fact that God can use means by

which the most incorrigible sinner may be entirely changed in a moment; and that, without doing any violence to his freedom.

But now, take another case. It will show just as clearly that God sometimes uses means whereby the sinner is not reclaimed in a moment, but that he requires a series of years. Take the case of Nebuchadnezzar. He was driven from his throne, and excluded from the haunts of men. According to the account he "did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Such was the severe discipline to which the wicked king was subjected, and subjected for a long period. But in due time the discipline had its effect. The king was reformed and restored. I suppose God could have captured him in a moment, as in the case of Saul; but He chose otherwise.

It may be asked: Whence such a difference in reclaiming these two men? They seem to have been much of the same spirit. It is said of Saul that he "breathed out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord;" and it is said of Nebuchadnezzar that he was "full of fury." It is said of Saul, too, that he witnessed against God's saints, and hounded them to their death. And it is said of Nebuchadnezzar that he cast the three faithful Hebrews into the burning fiery furnace. The main difference was, that Saul compassed the death of the saints by law; whereas Nebuchadnezzar himself was the law. In spirit and life the two men seem to have been much alike. Yet they were both reclaimed. But how? Certainly, by very different means.

As accounting for the different means so effectually used in these two cases, it may be said that they were men of different light, and hence their different treatment. Or it may be said that the world required Saul's services at once, and hence his immediate transformation; whereas the world could wait for the reformation of the king. Yet all such reasoning may be entirely beside the mark. It is a mystery profound. With our present limited outlook I think it would be wiser and more reverent to bow our heads in submission, and say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight." It seems to me that Nebuchadnezzar and Saul are typical cases of God's reformatory processes in the next life. Some of these processes may be sudden, and others more prolonged. And their severity or duration does not seem to depend on the depth of iniquity into which a man has sunk. It depends rather on his repentance. Some may require a long and severe discipline, like Nebuchadnezzar; others—possibly some of the greatest transgressors—may yield to the reformatory process without much delay. And it accords with our highest ideas of justice to believe that those who lived up to the light they had, though it were but a dim light, will experience little or no pain, except what may come of the rectifying of mistakes. Even this may be more than balanced by the illumination of new truth. But whether the needed discipline be long or short, and whether it be more or less severe, we believe it will have its due effect. Finally, all sin will be done away, and God will be all in all.

The unknown extent of suffering in the next life I think is the basis of warning for men to flee from the wrath to come. When we know that God is angry with sinners every day, we can imagine something of His wrath against sin in the next life, so long as the sin continues. In some cases this wrath may continue long, and the suffering which it entails may be severe. Certainly the divine favor will not rest on any sinner who continues alienated from God.

Is not this suffering in the future life sufficient to serve as a warning to sinners now? There is hardly any warning given by preachers at present, except a very general one which amounts almost to nothing. Preachers evidently do not believe in eternal torment. If they did, they would make that the basis of their warning, and never cease. But now that such a warning is almost never uttered, what is there to take its place? I answer, the unknown suffering of the next life, to be continued as long as sin continues.

But it may be said that such a warning would be far too mild to have any due effect. On the contrary, I venture to think it would be as effectual, and perhaps more so, than the warning of eternal torment. For this warning has always to be general. We have no definite conception of what constitutes the torment; hence men do not really believe it. Especially when it is represented as of eternal duration, the idea is entirely beyond men's imagination; and so the effect is far from proportionate to the warning.

But we can imagine something of the suffering of discipline. That comes within the scope of our imagination; yea, and of our experience, too. And when it is represented as ceasing when the desired result is secured, it commends itself to our highest ideas of benevolence, wisdom, and justice; and but for the baleful influence of tradition, would become at once credible.

If you want an example of the same principle on a smaller scale, take the case of Nebuchadnezzar to whom we referred. Was his a light punishment? Anything more dreadful it would be hard to conceive. But it was discipline; and the discipline was removed when it had accomplished its purpose. And don't

you think it had a most salutary effect on the man all his days? I imagine that the same principle applies to the next life. What the discipline may be, we know not; yet we can conceive that in certain cases it may be terrible suffering. But when the desired reformation is effected, the suffering will be removed. And don't you think that the very memory of that suffering will be a wholesome object lesson to all eternity?

This is the suffering which I would have proclaimed to all men as a warning. And it can be uttered with the accent of intelligent conviction, which the warning of endless torment never can. Moreover, it is so consonant with our best instincts of necessity, justice, mercy, truth, love—that it carries men's convictions at once.

Think of this also, that for aught we know, such an object lesson may be needed to all eternity, as a warning against sin. And we can conceive that it may vary immensely in different cases. When we recognize the variety of personality that has been created, the idea dawns on us that a great variety of suffering may be required to be an effective lesson through all eternity. Some may require more; others less. And God, who knows and has ordained the mental and moral calibre of every human soul, may regulate the discipline accordingly.

It may be, therefore, that Nebuchadnezzar could have been captured in a moment, as in the case of Saul; but it may have been that such would not have been a safe proceeding. He may have required the severer discipline as a necessary object lesson to all eternity. Saul was reclaimed at once; and if we may judge from his after life, he needed no prolonged discipline; and it is probable he will need none through the endless years. Thus God may adjust his discipline to each particular case.

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And we can well believe that the sufferings passed through in time as the result of sin may be so vividly recalled in the next life that they will be a warning against sin to all eternity. When we reflect on the vividness with which we now recall events of twenty, or forty, or sixty years ago, we can well believe that with our quickened memory in eternity, the events that happened in time will stand out in vivid reality for ever.

It does not seem far-fetched then to believe that this is the special function of suffering. Such a theory goes far to explain the mystery of pain. It may really be an everlasting warning against sin; and thus the redeemed may be preserved in eternal blessedness. This is a great mystery. The very thought of it excites our wonder, and love, and praise.

I have touched here, as I have said, on a great mystery; but it will be observed that I have advanced it only as a possibility. As such, it immensely enlarges our view of the wisdom and love of the divine administration, and that not only in this life, but in the next. It also gives us a faint light on the everlasting mystery of pain. If it should turn out that suffering in its varying form and degree is really necessary as an object lesson for all eternity, we can conceive that when we see it in this light we shall be almost overwhelmed with wonder and adoration.

VIII.

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

Meagre Details—Good Reasons Why—Extent of the Universe—Future Glory—Sin in Other Worlds—No Revelation—Future Abode of the Righteous—Solid or Ethereal—Impossible Revelations—Present Duties and Interests—Our Limitations—Necessity of Purification—Preaching to the Spirits in Prison—Stages of Progress—The Law of Gradual Development.

There is one matter to which I would refer at this stage, because I think the settlement of it on a reasonable basis will be a great aid to many devout minds. It will be supposed by many that if there is an intermediate state of purification, some mention of it, and some details of it, would be given in revelation. To my mind, the comparative silence of revelation in regard to it, counts for almost nothing in our estimate of its probability—I might almost say of its necessity.

There is one consideration of prime importance in this connection, which ought not to be overlooked. It is this: that in regard even to the future world of final blessedness, we have very meagre details. And

there are good reasons why we have not more. I think it is not generally realized how fragmentary are such details; and yet we believe in the fact itself beyond the shadow of a doubt. In fact there are few things in which we have more implicit confidence than a future world of blessedness and glory. But consider how few details of it are revealed. Think of the many subjects closely related to it on which we are in complete ignorance. It may be well to run over some of these matters briefly, that we may realize how utterly ignorant we are of affairs connected with that world of final blessedness. And if that be so in regard to heaven itself, how much less we may expect to be enlightened beforehand on the details of any intermediate state of preparation.

Think of the fact that we are surrounded by other worlds of glory; and yet we do not even know if any of those worlds are inhabited. To be sure, there are considerations founded on the material and moral order of things that assure us almost beyond a doubt that they are inhabited. But there is no proof. We simply do not know. One of those worlds is a thousand times larger than the earth; one is twelve hundred times; several are far more magnificent; yet we do not even know if they have any population.

More than that, we do not know if one of them—or our own earth—has passed through cycles of population during the uncounted centuries of the past. As little do we know if any or all of them will be theatres of life and intelligence in the future. Now if we know so little as to the history of our own and neighboring worlds in the past, and have no revelation as to their future, is it likely that we would be informed as to details of some world of purification located probably away in the realms of space?

Then this sun of ours is fourteen hundred thousand times larger than the earth. But we know almost nothing of his constitution or history. He is really a universe in himself. Of the functions he performs in reference to the worlds that surround him we know a little; but how his heat is sustained—what is attraction—what is his destiny—is all unknown. If we are so ignorant of this primal source of life in all these planetary worlds, are we likely to be informed of the methods of moral discipline, probably in some distant world?

But our sun, large and important as he is, is but a speck in creation. These myriads of stars that shine nightly in the heavens are all suns. It is calculated that the union of the telescope with the photographic plate brings five hundred millions of these stars into view. Some of them are demonstrated to be hundreds of times larger than our sun. But that is nearly all we know about them. Whether any of them has a retinue of worlds revolving around him like our sun, will never be known on this side of time. Then beyond all we can see, we recognize a probability of the existence of uncounted millions of worlds; but we know nothing of them. Therefore we would hardly expect to have details revealed of some distant sphere of purification.

Again, whether any of these worlds have fallen, we do not know; and as little do we know as to whether any of them have been redeemed. We may reason about the matter; but it is only a short way that reason will carry on such a profound question. I believe that the merit of the Sacrifice made in this world of ours might be made available in all worlds that need it, be their sin what it may. It is also very conceivable that the good news might be conveyed to those worlds by angels, just as the good news is made known in our world by men. The same principle would hold. In the one case there would be a wider application of the message than in the other; that is the main difference. And when we think of the swifter and easier movements of angels, even that difference might amount to nothing.

But the whole subject is one on which we have no revelation whatever. Now if there are millions of other worlds, with teeming populations, and if not the most meagre revelation has been made to us as to their moral character or destiny, it is surely not surprising that we have no revelation as to the details of a state of purification beyond this life. We have thankfully to recognize the fact that we are not burdened with revelations which would only confuse and distract us. It is surely a gracious providence that withholds revelations of such details for the present. But that is no argument why such details will not be revealed by and by, any more than that the unrevealed joys of heaven will be disclosed to us when we are able to understand and enjoy them.

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Still more; beyond the realm of stars whose outline is somewhat clearly marked, there is a dim shimmer of glory, suggestive of uncounted millions of stars and systems farther on. This golden glimmer of distant worlds has been likened to a candle shining through a horn. We are simply lost in the extent and glory of the starry hosts. Do we not begin to see that the universe is far too vast to be revealed to mortals? To have the essentials of truth and duty revealed to us here, in this dim corner of the universe, is as much as we ought to expect. By and by we may hope to have larger revelations.

We may realize this principle more fully if we come down again to the earth, and to enquire if this earth is to be the future abode of the righteous? Some say it is. We simply do not know. When we do not know if this earth is to be our future dwelling place, can we reasonably expect to have details of the

place and manner of our purification—though it be a matter of far higher moment?

Then again: Is the earth the final abode of the righteous? Or is it only to be the initial place of future blessedness? Or, are there many heavens, each preceding one to be a preparation for a higher? Here again all our thoughts are drowned.

Or again: Is heaven to be a solid world like this earth, or is it to be an ethereal world? Such questions are far too high for us. In this narrow sphere of earth and time we know almost nothing of the glory to be revealed. I would say that a study of the extent and magnificence of creation would give us some hints of what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. At all events the more we are acquainted with the glories of the universe, the more we shall realize how little is likely to be revealed of the details of any preparatory stage of final blessedness.

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And besides such a revelation being unreasonable, we believe it would be impossible. There are probably millions of worlds, as well as our own. Each one of these has likely a moral history. Now it is easily conceivable that the services rendered in heaven may have a close relation to some of these worlds. Thus we could not have a revelation of our future service without being let more or less into the moral history of those worlds. But it will be seen at once that this would be utterly beyond us, as well as useless to us at present. In fact it would only perplex and confuse us, and divert our attention from the practical duties of life.

It is remarkable also that we have almost no revelation of the present active service of the better world. To give us such a revelation might involve other revelations which in the meantime are too high and too complicated for us to understand. Everything is beautiful in its season. Just as now we do not try to initiate children into the problems of life that will come with mature age, so we, real children in understanding, are not burdened with the knowledge, and all that such knowledge would involve, that will come in a future life.

Besides; such premature knowledge would probably detach our interest and attention from the duties that press upon us now. We are here with certain duties and interests; and when these are duly apprehended they are quite sufficient to engage our time and thought, without being concerned with the duties that will come with a future state.

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Thus we see something of the wisdom and the love in giving us only such details as suit our present limitations. There may be a state of purification beyond this life; but we shall adapt ourselves to that state when the time comes; not before. When we see the character of God, as revealed in His Word; when we realize the sin and misery of our present condition; when we apprehend the wonderful sacrifice that has been made for the recovery of our race; and when we realize the unspeakable glory that may be ours—we begin to see the probability—yes, the necessity—of a process of purification beyond the sphere of time.

IMPRISONED SOULS.

Yet, while we have no details given us as to the process or the time required for purification, we have certain suggestions. In the Old Testament there is a reference to "prisoners of hope." The reference is somewhat obscure, and taken by itself it is of doubtful meaning. But in the New Testament it is intimated that Christ went and "preached to the spirits in prison." There we have a gleam of light as to what is meant by "prisoners of hope." There were imprisoned souls to whom Christ took some joyful message. We have no statement as to the purport of the message, or the circumstances of the prisoners, beyond the fact that they were confined.

While not going outside of what is revealed, it does not seem too much to assume that He took to them the good news of Restoration, and perhaps kindred topics. O yes; the Saviour's death had reference not to ourselves alone, but it had a relation to those in another world.

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Perhaps I ought to say here that this supposed state of discipline is by no means to be confounded with the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory.

The term of duration of purgatorial fire is supposed to be determined by the priest, who can effect a release at any time he pleases. It is simply a matter of payment. And the idea of purgatory may be held—I think is generally held—without conceiving of it as a means of purification. Is it not rather conceived

of as a place of punishment?

But the intermediate state we conceive of is a state of purification and education. There may be intense suffering in certain cases. We can conceive that such suffering may be required as a means of purification. In other cases no great suffering, or none at all, may be necessary. By some means, specially adapted to each case, every soul will be prepared to enter a state of blessedness.

Even that final state may have lower grades, preparatory for the higher. It does not seem consistent with God's dealings with man to thrust a frail human spirit into the blinding glory of heaven. It is far more likely that there are lower stages, preparatory for higher. When a child is born into the world it is not even aware for a time that it has entered on a new mode of existence. But it adapts itself unconsciously to its new surroundings, and by easy stages develops perhaps into a poet or a philosopher. In some such way, but on a higher plane, we can believe that the soul is developed in the future life. We may confidently leave all details with Him who is "Wise in Counsel, and excellent in working," and whose love is unchangeable and everlasting.

Just now I have met with a Christian minister whom I know well, and a worthy man he is, who has tried to evade the payment of a very small debt. Now is it to be supposed that when that man dies he will go straight into glory, infected with such a streak of meanness? Then where will it be purged out of him? Will the process of death effect it? Certainly not. What remains then, but that between this life and the next there is some process of purification.

And that case is only a typical one. If we knew all, perhaps we should find that there is a mean streak of some kind in every one of us. How then shall we get rid of it? Just ponder that problem for awhile.

IX.

THE SPIRITS IN PRISON.

The Descent of Jesus into Hades—Singular Reserve of Preachers
—Purgatory—Dr. Gerhardt's Book—A Bodily Resurrection—The Spirit
World Requires a Spirit Body.

Here I would advert briefly to a topic that seems to me to have a strong bearing in the same direction. I mean the descent of Jesus into Hades, and the intimation that He "preached to the spirits in prison." On this subject the whole Christian world—at least the Protestant world—has maintained a singular reserve. In fact I have never heard the matter even once casually referred to in any Protestant pulpit. It may be that even a casual reference to it might be taken as favoring the Roman Catholic doctrine of Purgatory. Such is the craven fear that men have of being supposed to be tainted with Romanism. In other cases it may be that the whole subject is thought to be involved in so much mystery that it is better to leave it alone. But I believe that if we had a larger and more sympathetic view of the entire domain of truth, this topic would be seen to be radiant with eternal hope.

In this spirit it is referred to by Dr. Calvin S. Gerhardt in his book on "Death and the Resurrection." That book came out some years ago, and there were some letters passed between the author and myself in reference to the contents. He holds the view that the body of Christ was not raised, but His spirit only; and he tries to sustain that view by a variety of arguments, some of which seem to me very unworthy. My own view is, that the body was actually raised, but that now being a spiritual body it had the power of transformation, so that at pleasure it could become visible or invisible to fleshly eyes.

However, in the same connection Dr. Gerhardt refers to Christ's descent into Hades; and he treats that matter with a candor and eloquence, along with good sense, that in my opinion, leaves nothing to be desired. I will here transcribe some passages of his on that topic, and so dismiss further discussion of it. He says:

"The popular doctrine which teaches that the opportunity of salvation *always* ends with the present life, finds no support in sacred Scripture and is completely overthrown by Christ's descent into Hades. This important stage of His mission is often overlooked, or ignored; and we must confess that we too stand with bated breath, before the problem which its consideration presents, for we are confronted here with mysteries. But the mysteries are not closed, and are not utterly incapable of solution."

Again he says: "Christ's visits to the earth were few and brief after His resurrection. Where then was He during the forty days when not visible to His disciples? Not in heaven, for He had not yet ascended. Neither was He on earth, for if any one truth was constantly more fully enforced by Him, it was that through His death He had passed beyond the sphere of the earthly. Where else then could He have sojourned but in Hades—that unseen world of the dead into which all men pass when they lay aside their mortal bodies, and begin to live in spiritual bodies."

Again: "To the penitent thief on the cross Jesus said, 'To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.' The Saviour, therefore, must have gone to the regions of the dead, for to the Jews, Paradise meant the locality in Hades to which the blessed dead were received."

Again: "St. Peter not only assures us that Christ descended into Hades, but also tells us why He went thither, '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 in the spirit,' in which he also went and preached to the spirits in prison."

Again: "Again 'For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit,'"

Again: "These passages of Scripture, as well as the whole drift of the New Testament, make plain the important truth that the great work which our Saviour prosecuted on earth He continued also in Hades. His incarnation and full union with us, in our earthly, mortal life, involved Him in a similar revelation to the dead, according to their altered conditions and environment. What He did for our earthly life He did for them there in full harmony with the changed circumstances of their post-mundane form of existence."

Again: "By His descent into Hades," says Martensen, "Christ revealed Himself as the Redeemer of all souls."

Once more: "The descent into the realm of the dead gave expression to the truth, that the distinctions Here and There—the limits of space—are of no significance regarding Christ, and do not concern His kingdom. No powers of nature, no limits of space or of time, can hinder Christ from finding His way to souls. His kingdom has extended even into the region of the dead, and still includes that region; and the distinctions of living and dead, of earlier and later generations of men, of times of ignorance and times of knowledge, possess but a transient significance."

In confirmation of these views, I would add one consideration of rather an abstract character. When our Saviour died on the cross, why did He not revive at once? Instead of that we know that He waited until the third day. I have no doubt that one reason was, that He intended that all believers in Him might have a conclusive proof that He had really died and revived. But one other reason may have been this, that He intended to visit the spirits in prison, and in order to be en rapport with them, He needed to go in the spirit. They were in the spirit; and for Him to go to them in a human body would have been to interpose an effectual barrier between Himself and them. If they are somewhere in the spirit world, a spirit body alone could reach them.

X.

DIVINE LOVE.

Infinite Being and Perfection—Grades of Being—Variety—Man's Limitations—Moral Beings—Hopeless Surroundings—All Are Children of God—Righting the Wrongs of Time—"The Heart of the Universe is Love"—Eternal Conscious Torment Incredible—Conquering Power of Love—Eternal Purpose Will Not Fail—Omnipotence in the Moral Realm—The Divine Expression of Love—Universal Atonement Involves Universal Salvation—Final Success of God's Designs—Will Evil Necessarily Perpetuate itself?—Triumph of Good Over Evil—Few Stripes or Many—Reformatory Punishment—Bringing Good out of Evil—Possibilities of Redeeming Grace—The Ransomed of the Lord—Wrath but the Shadow of Love—Former Eternity of Sinlessness—Wrath no Constituent of the Divine Character—Pity and Indignation.

There can be no mistake here. The Scripture declares, again and again that God is Love. Also, the Scripture is clear in regard to His infinity. In fact our reason would almost carry us so far. For if all things had a Creator, that Creator must have had no beginning. But we take it that God will be freely conceded to be infinite in His being, and in the qualities of His character.

He is infinite then in His love. Being infinite in His being, He could be no less than infinite in His love. That surely means that He loves every being that He has made. Will He not therefore do the most and best that is possible to be done for each one of His creatures? To be sure, there are grades of being. Some have a larger capacity than others. We know of no law by which love would impel the Creator to create all beings alike. No, there is a law of variety which we shall consider later; and that accounts for beings of different function, capacity, surroundings, employment, and so on. At the same time, is it not safe to infer that there is a possible maximum of happiness which every being has attained, or will attain, under a government of divine love?

Of course there may be limitations. Man has been made a free being. He may therefore limit his own possibilities. He may deliberately choose to do wrong. Thus he may impose a limitation on himself. In one sense this may be considered a great misfortune. But how else could a moral being be created? We cannot conceive of any other way. If we had not been created moral beings, we could never rise to anything worth while. God wanted to make the most and the best of us. But with that possibility of rising there was also the possibility of falling. Therefore, so far as that consideration is concerned, our creation, on this human status, was an expression of infinite love.

But then, the present is a state of discipline. Since sin has come in, and so marred our perfection and happiness, it has been ordained that the present life will be a preparation for a better future life. Therefore our present sinful limitations are not finally disastrous. They may be even turned to benedictions. Instances are not wanting where untold suffering has issued in great moral perfection, with a corresponding high place in the world beyond. Such considerations as these show clearly that our creation, even though we are fallen, was an act of infinite love.

Yes, but what about the untold millions who do not turn their present suffering to good account? Especially what about the uncounted millions of heathen? Many of them were born into conditions of utter hopelessness; their surroundings were of the worst; it would be utterly futile to expect that their present life could be a preparation for final blessedness.

Now is it to be supposed for a moment that God does not love every heathen just as He loves every Christian? Surely, they are all His children, and He loves every one of them with a Father's love. Then what about the other millions that live in Christian lands who have no idea of making the present life a preparation for the future? Are they not all equally dear to Him? Let us rise above all insular, mean, petty love of our own, and think of the love of God—impartial, free, infinite, everlasting! Can it be believed that the few favored ones who have lived in certain surroundings, and who thus have come to hear and heed the message of salvation, are destined for everlasting bliss; while all others, naturally no worse than they, are consigned to everlasting woe? Are these few fleeting years, and circumstances which we had little or no hand in forming, charged with such eternal possibilities? Yet we profess to believe that God rules, and that He loves every one of His creatures with an everlasting love!

Surely every candid mind and every human heart will repel such a possibility as their final extinction or damnation. And when we realize that God has all eternity to right the wrongs of time, we begin to realize that the present is but one epoch of His administration.

I have just read these words of an orthodox divine: "The heart of the universe is love." Yes, that is the language of the heart in its best moods, whatever our creed may be. And the heart will sometimes speak its conviction strongly. It does seem that orthodox divines at times forget that according to their belief God consigns untold millions of His creatures to eternal fire. Yet surely He is "the heart of the universe;" and "the heart of the universe is love." Does it not seem the blackest of contradictions?

And when we think of His wisdom to arrange, and His power to execute, it does seem hard to believe that eternal conscious torment will be the fate of any of His creatures. We may see but a short way into the whole scheme of the divine administration; but the heart will refuse to believe in such a paradox.

"Omnia vincet amor"—love conquers all things. We accept that as a proverb even in this selfish and cruel world. Yes, and despite all hindrances, we often see love's triumphs. When everything else fails, love will win. And is it to be conceived that God, Who is Love Personified, will not win? Yes; if we knew nothing more than the general principle, we might make a confident forecast that He will not fail. But how overwhelming is our conviction when we see infinite love joined with infinite wisdom and infinite power! What will not this triumvirate of infinities accomplish?

We may be told that sin is an infinite evil, and that even infinite love cannot conquer it. We refuse to

believe it. God is omnipotent in the moral, as well as in the material realm. Surely His infinite love will incline Him, His infinite wisdom will show Him how, and His infinite power will accomplish His desire.

Now again: The advocates of eternal torment will freely grant that God loves every soul that He has made. They will also concede that He is omniscient. Very well. Then He must have known that the millions of beings, now supposed to be in torment, were coming into the world; and He must have known that there was no possible way for them to avert their doom. And though He loved each of them with an infinite love, He made no way of escape, but consigned them to eternal torment. Foreseeing in His omniscience that all this would happen, He did not intercept their coming, which He could easily have done; nor did He provide any means of escape.

Is this the way infinite love, joined with divine foreknowledge, would act? Do not say that the matter is too high for us to understand. Even on a human plane we would expect a more beneficent result. How much more in the case of Him who foresees and arranges all contingencies, and whose love is from everlasting to everlasting. Do not such considerations as these absolutely prohibit the idea of endless suffering? Just take counsel with your own heart and mind.

Again, it is written that "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Now if He loved the world, He loved every individual in the world. He loves every soul of the human race. Not color, nor climate, nor civilization, nor any special epoch of the world's history, can make any restriction.

Now if God loved the world, He expressed His love for the world; and how did He express it? By giving his Son. Then He must have given His Son for every soul of man. It would be no expression of His love for me to give His Son for somebody else. But He loved me personally, and gave His Son for me personally. Hence Paul could say: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." And so everyone of the human race may truly say.

A THEORY.

Generality here tends to confusion and mistakes. It has been too much the habit to think and speak of God as giving His Son for the world, and yet holding a reserved and unexpressed idea that He gave His Son only for the saved. Such an idea is not often expressed publicly, and I believe is not held heartily. But it is formally professed; it is theory in a certain creed. Not only so, but it is felt that universal atonement involves universal salvation; and that is an issue which in many cases men are not prepared to accept. In fact many plain statements of Scripture are twisted and tortured out of their plain meaning, apparently to avoid the issue of universal salvation.

But let universal salvation be once granted, and all difficulty disappears. Then the plain statements of Scripture do not need to be modified, or explained away. Then all may freely accept the corollary that universal atonement involves universal salvation; only in a far larger sense than believed heretofore. We take in eternity now, as well as the small span of time. We begin to realize that the sweep of the eternal years makes no difference in the divine love or the divine purpose. In God's administration of the universe there may be good reasons for saving some of our race in this life; and some in the next; but the principle is the same; infinite wisdom, infinite power, and infinite love, will not fail of their purpose.

It is this belief in the final success of God's designs that gives us the assurance of ultimate Restoration. For if God loves the world—that is, every soul in the world—and if He gave His Son for the Salvation of the world—and if the sacrifice of the Son is sufficient for the salvation of the world—then we may be sure that infinite wisdom, love, and power will find a way of attaining the end in view. Somehow—some time—somewhere—the divine purpose will be accomplished.

I am fortified in this view by the words of an eminent Presbyterian divine that I have just chanced to meet with. He says: "God infallibly accomplishes everything at which He aims." I take that principle in a wider application than he intended; and taking it so, it is a strong argument for ultimate Restoration.

A SERIOUS DEPARTURE.

Just apply that principle to the theory of everlasting torment. Is it to be supposed that God really "aims" at that, and that hence He "infallibly accomplishes" it? It is almost blasphemy to think so. Yet that is the idea that has been held to be orthodox, and any apparent swerving from it has been treated as a serious departure from the faith. But men's hearts are sometimes better than their heads; hence we hear little now of eternal torment.

And the heart is a good place for a reform in doctrine to begin. When these larger ideas simmer for a while in men's hearts, they will gradually find expression on their tongues. There are many men who

feel the truth now that they will speak bye and bye. There is at present a fear, and a natural fear, of being disloyal to orthodoxy: but I believe the truth will come triumphantly to the front later on. There is a stage of silence, and there is a stage of speech. Meantime I plead for toleration; that is as much as can be expected now. It is well if we have advanced so far. Not long ago there was persecution.

To all this it may be objected that if men remain obdurate in this life, withstanding all the overtures of mercy that are addressed to them, is it not likely that they will remain so for ever? This is a serious question. Let us seriously consider it.

EVEN IF THEY ARE FAVORED.

Roughly, there are two classes of men to be recognized. First there are those who have sat under the Gospel for years, but who have not yielded to its claims. The question is, Will they ever yield, even if they are favored with another opportunity? Will not the habit of their life culminate in an eternal refusal?

Some think it will. My old minister used to say that it is the nature of evil to perpetuate itself. Hence it was argued that grace refused here will be always refused, even though it were offered. It was argued that the increased evil character which will come to a wicked man on entering the next life, together with the evil influences and surroundings of that life, will so absolutely steel him against all good that he will inevitably go on from bad to worse for ever. Hence the eternity of suffering.

To my mind, all this is only theory. We really know very little of the next life. The influences that may be used for reformation may really be overpowering. Just think how it has fared with this world of ours since the introduction of evil. Has evil perpetuated itself? Or will it perpetuate itself? No! the very opposite has been the case, and will be the case. A scheme of redemption above all human thought has been enacted here, by which the world has in part regained the innocence that if lost, and is destined to regain it fully.

No one could have foreseen this. We can imagine some sinless world, cognizant of the evil that had entered here, forecasting our eternal doom. They might reason that evil would perpetuate itself, and that therefore there could be nothing in store for us but eternal sin and suffering. They did not know the provision that was to be made for our redemption; hence their conclusion would be all wrong.

TRIUMPH OF GOOD OVER EVIL.

It may just be so in our forecasts of the next life. In fact there is more likelihood of the triumph of good over evil in the next life than there could have been originally in this. And why? Because we know that a ransom has not to be provided, but that it is provided. We also know that it has been provided at a fearful cost, and we know that the glory of God is to a large extent bound up in its success. Moreover, we know that Christ is yet to see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. And will anything less satisfy Him than the salvation of every one for whom He died? He has said, too, that He will draw all men to Himself. It is plain that He does not draw all men in this life; will He not then draw them in the next life? Therefore I think it is not too much to say that so far as we know, there does seem a greater probability of grace triumphing over sin in the next life than there was antecedently in the present life. What a door of hope is thus opened for our lost race!

I recall another passage of wonderful import in this connection. Our Lord said: "That servant which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."

Now it is very dear that in thousands of cases those words are not fulfilled in this life. There are atrociously wicked men who are not beaten with any, not to say many, stripes. That was the Psalmist's trouble. He saw that the ungodly prospered. He said that they were not in trouble as other men, nor plagued as other men. He said that they had more than heart could wish. Plainly, the threatening was not executed upon them in the present life. If the words are to come true at all, they must be fulfilled in the next life. It is one of many passages that require our purview to be extended into the future life to understand them. But if the words are to be fulfilled in the next life, must not their fulfillment be conditioned on the theory of Restoration? Suppose there is extinction at death. How could any stripes be laid on a man who is extinct? Does not that consideration settle the idea of extinction?

And what about endless torment? Certainly many stripes are laid on the man in endless torment. But what about the man who is to be beaten with few stripes? Would it be possible to conceive of endless torment as being only a few stripes? To be sure, there might be degrees of torment; and the man in a mild degree of suffering would not suffer so much as the man in an intense degree. But then, the

suffering is to be for ever and ever. It is to be an eternity of suffering. In that case, the suffering might be reduced to the mildest form of discomfort; but as it is to be eternal in duration, the sum total of it would be infinite. Could any stretch of imagination conceive of such suffering being only a few stripes? It does seem to me that both the theory of extinction, and that of torment, utterly break down under that test.

But how natural and reasonable is the statement on the theory of Restoration. In that case the words come literally true. We can well believe that atrocious sinners have terrible pains and penalties before they repent, and are redeemed. On the other hand, we can imagine that sins of a milder type, especially sins of ignorance, will call for but few stripes. We would go further, and believe that in the case of advanced Christians, there will be only such suffering as is inseparable from the discovery of mistakes, and consequent development.

In the case of all suffering, of whatever degree, we believe that it will be rather of a reformatory, than of a punitive character. Suffering may or may not be proportionate to sin. The idea is this, that, when it has accomplished the reformation of the sinner it will cease.

Thus the statement of our Lord will find its due fulfillment. It is one of many statements which can be explained only on the basis of its application to the next life. But when we give such statements their true application, they require no forcing to make them seem natural and reasonable.

Further, I think it is fair to imagine, as we said before, that the suffering induced by sin will be an object lesson to all eternity of the evil of sin. Possibly it may be an infallible safeguard against sin in every form. This would be an expansion of the principle that God brings good out of evil; and it would be the grandest expansion of that principle that we can conceive.

When we put all these considerations together, and when we add to them the further consideration that God's love is from everlasting to everlasting, we begin to see wonderful possibilities of redeeming grace.

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Along the same line, take as an illustration the salvation of particular individuals. We see what has been enacted in the case of a lost world. Now take the case of one lost soul; and the matter may become a little clearer.

NOT ASKED TO SURRENDER.

Take the case of Saul of Tarsus. I have referred to him elsewhere as a man who went as far as man could go in crime. But he was arrested and saved in a moment. And mark you, he was not coerced. No violence was done to his perfect freedom. Every man is free; that is his birthright; in Saul's case he was not asked to surrender an iota of it. Yet by some mysterious divine power he changed in a moment of time. Henceforth he was a new man, with a new heart, new ideals, new hopes, new ambitions, a new life.

Now what I contend is, that the power and grace that could so radically and so quickly change a man like that, is not to be limited to this little span of life, nor to the most incorrigible transgression. What are a few years of time to Him whose power, whose presence, whose love, fill all eternity? I imagine that He who knew how to convert Saul in a moment, can convert the most abandoned of mankind.

Then, as I said, there is another class of men to be considered. I mean the heathen, and all those who never had the means of knowing the way of life. What about the untold millions that passed away in the darkness? Will not the grace and power that redeemed such a man as Saul be available in their case? Yes! we think that—judged by the highest standards we know—there would be far more mercy for them, and the work of saving them would be a thousand fold easier. But we are dealing here with power and love that are infinite. No doubt the sin that has to be overcome is great; but we believe it will come true again that "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." After all, it is infinite grace against human sin. In such a case, it is not hard to forecast which will win the day. God will evermore be triumphant.

O yes! the ransomed of the Lord will come home at last. What a day it will be when they will come to Zion with songs! The old prophecy will then have its complete fulfillment: "They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

Though I lay so much stress on the omnipotence of divine love, I do not forget that divine wrath must be reckoned with as well. "God is angry with sinners every day." "Tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil." "Our God is consuming fire." But the essential thing is love. "God is love."

It is a constituent of His character. That could not be said of wrath. It is but the dark shadow of love. In a state of innocence it could not exist. When sin is done away, wrath will be seen no more.

If we only go back far enough in our thought we will certainly come to a time when divine wrath could not exist. Go back to the time before the angels sinned. Go back to the time before there was sin of any kind in all God's universe. But mark, no matter how far that takes you back—there was an eternity of sinlessness before it. Yes; an eternity of sinlessness. There was no wrath then. It could not exist. Therefore we could not say that it was a constituent of the divine character. No; but it was a potentiality of the divine character. It could have no existence until sin appeared. But love is from everlasting. It is by far the mightier attribute. It is of the very essence of God. United with infinite wisdom and power, we would expect it to have the final victory.

STERN FOR THE MOMENT.

Even when there is divine wrath, there is infinite love blended and mingled with it. We shall see this as in a picture if we look at that scene in the life of Christ when He healed a certain man in the Synagogue. It was the Sabbath day. Knowing the hardness and hypocrisy of those present, He flung out this challenge—"Is it right to do good on the Sabbath day?" They could make no answer without committing themselves. Then we read that Christ "looked round about them with indignation." Ah, but listen. It is added immediately that he "was grieved for the hardness of their hearts." His face that was stern for the moment was strangely softened. O yes; love was ever behind His wrath. His indignation was never far removed from tears. And so God can be angry with sinners, at the same time that He loves them with an everlasting love.

We see the same union of pity with indignation in that scene where Christ wept over the sinful city. He had to weep tears of pity over the nation's coming doom; yes, but He could pronounce that doom; and in His wonderful providence He could even arrange for effecting it. So I do not overlook the fact that we have manifestations of divine wrath, as well as divine love; yes, fiery indignation as well as tender compassion. But let us not forget that love is the positive, essential, eternal attribute; and it would be strange indeed if it is not finally victorious.

You may bring this idea of the union of love and indignation close home to yourself. We will suppose that you are a father, and that a son of yours has turned out to be a prodigal. He has gone away from home, bent on a course of crime. Will you not have alternations of love and indignation? Yes, you will sigh and pine for his return; and you will have righteous anger at times over his evil course. And if the son repents, and one day comes home again, will you not receive him with joy? O yes, you will run to meet him, like the father in the Gospel story.

And do you think that your love is more enduring than God's? Are not we all His children, though we have strayed away from Him? Does He not look and long for our return? O yes; and He will accomplish it. The difference is, that He has all power, and He has ways and means of attaining His ends. Let us be assured that "His counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

In this connection there is a very important consideration. It is this—that no design of God can ultimately fail. We read that He "willeth not the death of a sinner." We read that He "desires all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth." Have we ever stopped to think how unlikely it is that the Infinite One has any desire which He cannot accomplish? If any of His creatures are consigned to eternal torment, and if He wishes, as He says He does, to save them from that fate, does He not desire what He cannot accomplish? Remember that he has all moral as well as all physical power; remember that his love will impel Him to use His power; remember that in His infinite wisdom He knows how; and it will be seen that He has no design which He cannot effect. Just ponder this idea for a while before you go farther.

I was revolving this thought in my mind when I chanced to meet with, a very terse expression of it. I have already quoted an eminent divine who said: "God infallibly accomplishes everything at which He aims." The theologian did not think that his dictum would be given such a wide application. But it commends itself to our judgment nevertheless, be the application what it may. The same thought was differently expressed recently, from a scientific point of view. Sir Oliver Lodge said in a recent lecture: "The Creator of the Universe is not going to be frustrated by the insignificant efforts of His own creatures."

ON A LARGE SCALE.

In the light of this fact sin appears but an episode in eternal providence; and we can conceive that it is permitted for a time, for the realization of a greater good. It is but an expansion of the acknowledged

principle that God brings good out of evil. Sin is not the normal condition of the universe. It is abnormal, and in time will give way to normal conditions. We are accustomed to believe in this principle on a small scale; but if we accustom ourselves to regard the same principle on a large scale it will not be difficult to believe that sin will ultimately be done away. In the history of eternity, we can imagine it to be but a transient circumstance, like a fleck of cloud in a summer sky; and even that fleck will disappear.

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Just now, since writing these lines, I have had a very singular experience. A gentleman had written me a year ago in warm appreciation of my books. But I did not meet with him until a few days ago. In our conversation he told me that on reading a certain passage—he quoted the passage—he was so overpowered that he fell backward in a kind of swoon or trance. Then he was struck by something like a spark of fire. His impulse was to cry out, but he restrained himself, and had such a vision of the love of God that he wept, and wept, and wept, in an ecstasy of joy. Indeed he was overcome when he told me the story. And this man is no weakling, by any means. He is a strong man, physically, intellectually, and spiritually. When I realized that I could be used to produce an effect like that, I was filled with wonder, and love, and praise.

Now I hesitated about giving this experience, for to some it may look like egotism. But it may be taken on a higher ground. I would like to ask: Is it conceivable that such divine love, united with divine wisdom, and divine power, has no better way of disposing of the great majority of the human race than consigning them to everlasting torment? And more than that; each one of these myriads is God's own child, as truly—perhaps more intimately—than our children are our own. I say, is it conceivable that he has nothing better for them in store? Except our mind and heart have been utterly warped by traditional views, surely we will refuse to believe it.

XI.

THE ATONEMENT.

Extent of the Atonement—The Dilemma of Universal Atonement and Partial Salvation—Human Systems of Truth—Methodist Theology—Tradition and Reason—Dr. Dale's View—No Divine Failure—Imperfection of All Theological Systems—"Sufficient but not Efficient"—Undeveloped Possibilities—The Angel in the Apocalypse—Omnipotence Both in the Physical and the Moral Realm—The Short Epoch of Time—Advance of the Presbyterian Church in the United States—Individual Congregations—Hardening Effects of the Narrower View—The Softening Influence of Dreams—Divine Capacity of Suffering—Persistence of What is Good—Good Men Who Are Not Christians—Insanity—Blind Tom.

In this larger view all difficulty disappears in regard to the extent of the Atonement. Sometime ago men had little conception of the operation of saving grace beyond this life. It was believed that every man fixed his eternal destiny here and now. But then there would arise in thoughtful minds a difficulty about the extent of the Atonement. To a candid mind it was manifestly universal. The statements of Scripture are full and clear on that point, yet it would appear very strange that there would be universal Atonement, but not universal salvation. Would not that look very like a failure of the divine plan? If Christ gave Himself for the sins of the world, would not the sins of the world be put away? If He is called the Saviour of the world, is He so only in name, and not in fact?

But clearly, all the world was not saved. Here was the dilemma. The difficulty was, to square universal Atonement with partial salvation. So the difficulty was solved by one party in adopting the theory of a limited Atonement, and so that doctrine became a cardinal plank in the Calvinistic theology. It could not be conceived of as a possibility that God would make provision for the salvation of the whole world, and thus express His desire for the salvation of the whole world, yet that His provision and His desire should fail of their effect.

Surely this was right. But it was not right to ignore the plain teaching of Scripture for the sake of building up any human system. It would have been better to accept the clear statements of the word,

contradictory though they might appear, and trust that some day divine harmony would be revealed.

That revelation has come now. The harmony consists in the fact that all the world will be redeemed yet, in accordance with the provision that God made for, and desires, such a consummation. The difference is, that the operations of divine grace are not restricted to this short span of time, as men supposed. But the time will come! Oh, yes; it will come! If Christ tasted death for every man, He will save every man! Praise His name forever! The very thought is enough to awaken our everlasting songs!

Herein consists, as it seems to me, the weakness of the Methodist theology. In that Communion it is believed that the Atonement is universal, but that salvation is not universal. Thus the divine intention is supposed to fail of its effect. So I think it would appear to any mind untrammelled by tradition.

But putting tradition aside, what does reason say? And what do our highest thoughts of divine love, and power, and purpose say? Are not our best ideas of fitness in accord with the view that Atonement and Salvation are co-extensive? When we once receive the idea that divine love and power have no petty restrictions of place or time, will we not accept the larger theory? And this one conception will transform and transfigure all our thoughts of redemption. I wish some of our Methodist brethren would look into this matter candidly, and say if I am not right.

Thus the Calvinists made one mistake, and the Arminians made another. If both would now adopt the larger view, that one idea would compose nearly all their differences, and unite them in a bond which our fathers never dreamed of. Would it be too much to hope for that? I suppose it would, just at present. But the spirit of unity is here, and I believe that some day it will embody itself in form.

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I quote elsewhere the saying of an orthodox divine that "God infallibly accomplishes everything at which He aims." Then what does He "aim" at? Dr. R. W. Dale tells us. He says: "Every man bears the image of God, and was created to abide in the Home of God." Is not that direct and clear? "Every man was created to abide in the Home of God." That was God's aim. But is it "accomplished?" The orthodox view is that it is not. According to that view there are untold millions of men who will never see "the Home of God." Here is a manifest contradiction. Surely if "every man was created to abide in God's home," and if every purpose of God will infallibly be accomplished, there is salvation for the whole race.

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This question has a very direct bearing on the idea of Restoration. An important section of the church believes that whoever is atoned for will infallibly be saved; and no others. But as all men are not saved, to be logical the framers of that system inferred that the Atonement is limited in its extent. They had no idea of the Atonement operating beyond this life; so their theory necessarily consigned the majority of the human race to everlasting torment.

What a pity it was that they had not the larger view. Then there would have been no logical need to limit the Scriptural idea of Atonement. In that case, they would have to admit on their own ground that the Atonement issues in the salvation of the whole race. But their system of doctrine was logically welded together by a number of propositions; and not one of these propositions could be omitted without dissolving the whole structure. So the limited Atonement idea was adopted as a necessity; and I suppose men schooled themselves to believe it was Scriptural.

As a matter of fact, however, and to a mind not biased by any previous opinion, the Universality of the Atonement is taught in Scripture with absolute clearness. So much is this the case that the doctrine is regularly preached in most if not all Evangelical Churches to-day, even in those which deny it in their creed. And if the question were put to the people generally, both lay and clerical of all churches, and a candid spontaneous answer required, there is no doubt that an overwhelming majority—perhaps a thousand to one—would say that Christ died for the whole race. We ought to take warning, then, not to make our systems of theology too complete, realizing how little we know as yet of God's works and ways.

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But now, if we take the framers of that system on their own ground, what is the result? They believed that the Atonement would issue in salvation for every one for whom it was intended. That is not a far-fetched idea, by any means. It is only saying that God will accomplish that which He intended. A universal Atonement will therefore mean universal salvation. Certainly that is not attained in the present life; therefore it will be attained in the life to come. It is a strong argument for universal salvation.

If only this larger view had broken on men's vision there would have been no difficulty. But the "due

time" for such a revelation had not come. It was no fault of our fathers, therefore, that they could not see that which was not as yet revealed. The only fault was, that they tried to make their theological system too perfect. The fact is, that it is not for us to make any theological system perfect. New light may come, and cause us to re-arrange or enlarge our ideas. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge, of God!"

Another argument for the ultimate salvation of all, is this: that Christ identifies Himself with the suffering and the unfortunate of the whole race. It will be remembered that in the last judgment He is supposed to say, "I was hungry, and ye fed me; I was thirsty and ye gave me drink;" and so on. Then he explains: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." You observe that He makes no distinction between those whom He atoned for, and those for whom he did not. He includes all the unfortunate of the whole race, even the criminals who were in prison. He identifies Himself with them every one. And if He does, is it to be supposed that He died for only some of them? How could He identify Himself with those for whom He had not atoned, and for whom there could not be any salvation? It is said that His Atonement is "sufficient" for all; yet on the theory of a limited Atonement it is claimed that it is not "efficient" for all. But whether it be "sufficient" or "efficient," our Lord makes no difference. How could He so utterly and so tenderly ally Himself with any for whom He had not provided the possibility of salvation—a salvation admittedly "sufficient" for all? The inevitable presumption is, that He atoned for them every one, and so could identify Himself with them every one.

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that salvation is provided for each one of them; and that if they do not attain to it in this life, they will in the next. That may appear a vast problem to us whose views of time and space are so limited; but it may be easy to Him to whom the whole span of time is but a passing epoch in the everlasting years.

Apart from this somewhat legal aspect of the case, there is another aspect of it which must appeal with great force to every reflective mind. I mean the undeveloped possibilities stored up in every human soul. We may sink so low as to appear but as dull clods; but the glory of man is the potentiality within him, capable, it would seem, of everlasting development.

Witness that "angel" who conducted St. John through the world of bliss, and explained to him the meaning of the wonderful scenes that were witnessed. So glorious was that "angel" in form, and so vast in knowledge, that John fell down at his feet to worship him. Then it turned out that the "angel" was just a man. He said he was one of the prophets. Perhaps he was Moses or Isaiah or Ezekiel, or some one of the writers of the Old Testament. They lived in a very primitive age. But see this prophet now. In a few centuries he has been developed to amazing heights of knowledge and blessedness. And we may well believe that such a process of development will go on to all eternity.

Now are we to believe that God has created such possibility of development; yet that it will issue in a single case in utter failure? Utter failure! No; not merely utter failure, but a fate ten thousand times worse than that. For endless torment would mean the development of all possible evil to all eternity. Are we prepared to say that such will be the issue in a single instance, of God's wise, and powerful, and righteous administration? Surely, surely, there will be no such failure.

We cited elsewhere that it is the law of the universe that what is good will endure. But here we have not merely a contravention of that law, but an utter and everlasting breakdown of the divine administration. In a universe where God rules in wisdom, in righteousness, and in love; and where moreover He is possessed of all power, not only physical but moral, it seems almost blasphemy to think of such failure.

There is a passage in the Epistle to the Romans that seems to me to put the question beyond doubt. I refer to the fifth chapter. We have there the fulness of salvation set forth in wonderful terms. In particular, we have the doctrine of the Atonement presented in all its divine efficacy. And you will notice that it is set forth both as to its quality, and its extent.

As to its quality, it is said to be more than sufficient; and as to its extent it is represented to be as wide as the human race. As to its quality, take these words: "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." As to its extent, take these: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

It seems to me a wonderful thing that these glorious truths were in obscurity so long. I suppose it must be due to the fact that the idea of a limited Atonement came to be really believed. There was evidently a limited salvation; must there not then be a limited Atonement? So that doctrine became a necessary part of a certain system of theology; and men clung to it—honestly no doubt—thinking that if that doctrine would go, their whole system of truth would have to go along with it. All credit is thus due to the men who were so tenacious of what they believed to be the truth.

But we get larger conceptions as time goes on; and it seems a marvel that we had not such conceptions sooner. Take for instance the word "many" as it occurs twice in the one sentence that we have quoted. Has it not the same meaning in both cases? Both good language and good sense—apart from all preconceived opinion—would say that it has. But in the one case "many were made sinners." There is no doubt about the meaning of the word there. Certainly the whole race was made sinners. There is no room for controversy on that ground. But then, in the same sentence it is declared that "many shall be made righteous." If the word "many" in the first instance, means the whole race, has it not the same significance in the second instance? Surely words could not be plainer, or more emphatic.

To be sure, we may not see how such a promise is going to be fulfilled. In earlier times it seemed impossible; nay, a contradiction of what was passing before men's eyes every day. Many that were made sinners were certainly not made righteous. But men saw only the first part of God's administration. They had no idea that another part had to come, in which the promise would be fulfilled. So the promise was minimized, and shorn of its glorious meaning. Surely, the promise will be fulfilled. God is not restricted to this short epoch of time.

Then in regard to the quality or value of the Atonement, we have a wonderful testimony in these words: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." That is, grace was much more than sufficient to put away the sin, universal as it was. So I reverently think the Atonement could be applied effectually to other worlds, if they need it. But passing by that point, for it is a mystery, I would emphasize the fact that the Atonement was greater than the sin. And think you, will it fail of its effect?

I wish that thoughtful theologians in the Methodist Church would duly consider this. Their theory is, that the Atonement is universal; but they deny universal salvation. Is not that the same as to say that in the case of some, Christ died in vain? But is that possible? If God really desires the salvation of all men, as we know He does; and if He has made provision for the salvation of all men, as He certainly has; will He not somehow and somewhere accomplish His desire? As to the doctrine of falling finally from grace, which Arminians believe, and Calvinists deny, on this basis both are right. Suppose that there is a final falling away in this life, and Restoration in the next, is there not harmony in the highest sense? O yes; in this larger view, there is both falling from grace, and final perseverance.

In fact there is nothing that would unite the Evangelical Churches so effectually as a consensus of belief in universal salvation. This may seem a startling proposition to those who have not given the subject much attention; but after all, it is but an expansion of the idea that God's "counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

I TOOK THE LARGER VIEW.

We are not surprised, therefore, that we have in Scripture such explicit statements as to the universality of the Atonement. I was brought up in that church which is identified with the theory of a limited Atonement. At an early age, however, I took the larger view of the Atonement, and I hold that view with increasing conviction now. In fact I do not see how the idea of a limited Atonement ever came to command the assent of intelligent men, except that it was found to be necessary as a part of a preconceived system of theology.

Surely it was a great pity that men thought it necessary in bygone years to make their systems of theology so complete. Of course they are complete in the divine mind. But they cannot be so in ours. We see but a short way into the whole scheme of things. And when men thought that God's plan of grace is restricted to the present life, it is not so surprising that they favored the idea of a limited Atonement. They believed that all of God's purposes of salvation are realized in this life. But when we realize that God's saving plans extend into the next life, it is not hard to believe in the Atonement being universal. Thus we can take the plain statements of Scripture in their obvious sense, without twisting them into unison with some preconceived theory.

In my view we ought to accept the plain statements of the Word of God. If they seem to involve impossibilities, let us wait for further light. To me it seems that universal Atonement involves universal Restoration: and that idea solves the whole difficulty.

A noted Professor of Theology once sought to entrap me on that very point. I took a firm stand on the universal theory of the Atonement, He wanted to know what that would lead to; evidently hoping to

commit me to Universalism. I said that if it was revealed we ought to accept it, no matter what it led to. At that time I had not accepted the idea of Restoration, but I strongly believed in the universality of the Atonement. Now the idea of Restoration rounds out and completes that view.

A SPONTANEOUS ANSWER.

I fully believe that in this matter I do not stand alone. I believe that this same liberal view of the Atonement is held, consciously or unconsciously, by the great majority of our ministers and members. If a spontaneous answer were asked as to whether Christ died for the whole of mankind or a part only, I feel sure that the general response would be that he died for all. And I appeal to you, if that is not your most inner and sacred conviction? In your best moods, when all theological subtleties are put aside, can you endure the idea of a limited Atonement? I appeal to all men of a candid, progressive mind, if we are not really at one here? Then be faithful to that inner light. It is the light of God.

This doctrine of universal Atonement was endorsed lately by the American Presbyterian Church. In Article VIII of the "Brief Statement" adopted by that Church, these words occur: "For us He fulfilled all righteousness, and satisfied eternal justice, offering Himself a perfect sacrifice upon the cross to take away the sin of the world." Thus the American Church has moved unto the broader basis of universal Atonement.

THE SPIRIT OF THE LARGER DOCTRINE.

And not only has that Church formally taken that position, but the spirit of the larger doctrine has so prevailed in the Church for some years past, that individual congregations could take the broader basis without having their soundness in the faith called in question. In a manual published by the Third Presbyterian Church of Chicago, for instance, the "Articles of Faith" of that Congregation are set forth under seven heads. Article III reads thus:—"We believe that Jesus Christ our Mediator is truly God and truly man, and that by His sufferings and death on the cross He made Atonement for the sins of the world; so that the offers of salvation are sincerely made to all men, and all who repent and believe in Him will be justified and saved." That exposition of the doctrine entirely accords with my view. It was by mere accident I saw this manual; it may be presumed that many other congregations have taken similar ground without challenge.

Not only so, but we have the doctrine of a universal Atonement accepted and clearly expressed in the statement of doctrine proposed as a basis of union between the Presbyterian, the Methodist and the Congregational Churches in Canada, so the orthodox people have cut themselves quite loose from their ancient moorings. Here is a marvel indeed. Wedded to the Confession of Faith as the Presbyterian Church has been, at least in theory, that Confession is now ignored. Surely the truth is advancing.

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I am glad to see such an explicit statement of this great doctrine. I can only imagine that the compilers of the Canadian Hymn Book forgot for the time their technical theology, and adopted the expression of their hearts. For, despite all theology, universal Atonement is the faith of the people. Yes, and it is the faith of the preacher. Since I was a child I never heard a limited Atonement preached; but I have heard a universal Atonement preached hundreds of times; and no one raises a cry at want of orthodoxy.

I am glad, especially, that we have been delivered from the hardening effects of the narrower view. In earlier times there were theologians who almost gloated over the damnation of millions of our race. And they were damned—so these theologians thought—simply because they were not elected and Christ had not died for them. With the utmost equanimity orthodox divines contemplated their eternal torment. To such hardness can men be brought by a false view, and in the name of religion. So the position of Queen Mary was logical enough from that point of view. When she was asked if she thought it right to burn heretics, she said: "How can it be wrong for me to burn them for a few minutes, when God Almighty is going to burn them for ever?"

Speaking of the hardening influence of such views, it is a great joy to think that we shall not always be so callous as we are now. Deep down in our souls there is a susceptibility to tenderness that we do not generally suspect. Sometimes, from no cause that we can see, there breaks on our hearts a ripple of peace like a breath of perfume from some far off land of flowers, or a snatch of melody from some distant land of song.

I have the idea that one of the functions of sleep is to arouse this latent tenderness. At all events, we have sometimes a strange tenderness in sleep, of which we hardly seem capable in our waking hours. I remember one very vivid occasion of this kind. A man whom I had seen but twice—a very common man,

with no special attraction—I dreamed of, and in my dream I loved him with the utmost intensity. When I suddenly awoke, and when I realized that in this life I should likely never see him again, it was almost agony. Many a time I have had such experiences in sleep; and I doubt not that so have others. Such experiences do seem to be forecasts of the tenderness that we shall yet have for every brother of the human race, when we come to our best. With such feelings, how could we bear the thought that any so dear to us are in everlasting torment?

It may be well to quote here a few passages of Scripture in which the doctrine of universal Atonement is stated with all clearness. It is stated again and again without any ambiguity that Christ died for all. It is said that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." It is said that "He gave Himself a ransom for all," It is said that He "tasted death for every man." We read that "the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

These are but a few of many passages in which the great idea is set forth. Language could not be plainer. Jesus died for the sins of the whole race.

Now the question arises: Will He not find some way of redeeming every soul for which He died? Would He die for the world, and then permit any of the world to perish? Let us remember that He has ways and means of overcoming opposition without doing any violence to human freedom. We instanced the conversion of Saul of Tarsus to prove that point. What He did in that case He can do in others.

BUT A PASSING EPOCH.

Let us remember that He knew well the magnitude of the task He had undertaken. Let us remember that He does nothing in vain. Let us remember that His love, and power, and purpose have undergone no change. And let us remember that this little span of time is but a passing epoch in His administration. He can complete in a future age what He commenced in this age. Nay, not commenced; for His purpose dates back from the eternal past. He is "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world."

When we take this larger view, it is not difficult to believe literally that "His mercy endureth forever," and that it will find scope for its operation so long as one soul remains in alienation from Him. If you have been brought up to the narrower view, and if you have held that view for long years, it may be enlarged in a moment. One flash of divine illumination can reveal wonders of redeeming love.

We might go on at a great length in citing Scripture statements that have really no meaning apart from God's gracious design to men in a future age. Certainly Scripture is the paramount authority, and some will take it as superior to all reason on a question like this. But there are those who do not accord to Scripture the supreme authority; they rely more on reason and common sense; and I am hopeful they will read these remarks. For their sake I will submit some considerations from reason that may come closer home.

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One consideration is, that God made a sacrifice of unfathomable depth in giving His Son for the redemption of the race. No one will ever know what it cost the Father to make that sacrifice. Some theologians believe that God cannot suffer. I wonder where they got that idea. I would ask you: If you are a father and have an only son who has never given you offense in thought, word, or deed, but has lived in the most cordial and intimate terms with you for many years—could you give that son up to untold agony and death without making a sacrifice?

Now this is what the Father did when He gave up the Son to suffering and death; only the cordial feeling between the Father and the Son was far more intimate than in our case, and had lasted through a past eternity, whereas ours has endured but a few years.

THE DIVINE IMAGE.

As to the capacity of suffering in such a case on the part of God, we can judge of that faintly by our own case. We were made in the divine image, and suffer in a human degree as He suffers in a divine degree. Conceive, then, if you can, the untold suffering of the Father in making that sacrifice. The suffering which the Father endured I believe will never be measured.

The matter is presented in that way when it is said that God so loved the world that He gave His Son. The word *so* in that connection would have no meaning if it did not mean sacrifice. I believe it means a depth of suffering which no man nor angel has sounded.

Now can it be thought that the Father would make such a sacrifice for less than the whole race? If the Atonement was suitable for every one of the race was it not intended for every one? And cannot God make it effective for every one? Evidently it is not so now. But all eternity is at God's disposal. Can it be imagined that having made a suitable provision for all, He will be content with saving only some?

In fact I have the idea that God suffered by sympathy with the Son as much as the Son suffered actually. We can never know in this life if that was really so; but I have the idea that there was such divine sympathy between the Father and the Son that they suffered equally. This is holy ground; we shall trespass on it no further.

But do you think the Father will ever be satisfied until every soul for whom Christ died will be saved? He saw the end from the beginning. He is not taken by surprise that so few are saved. Now all eternity is at His disposal. Who can say that in the infinite sweep of His administration, which relates to other worlds as well as ours, there may not be good reasons for saving some of our race in the next life? At all events, His counsel will stand. He will do all His pleasure. The day will come when every prodigal will come home. Then Hallelujah! "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

And so with Christ as well. His sacrifice is the expression of His love, and the only adequate expression of it. He loved us, and gave Himself for us. Paul says, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." So every believing sinner may say. And in securing the effects of that sacrifice He is not limited to the short era of time. If He had chosen He might have secured the effects of His sacrifice in this age. But for some good reason unknown to us, His redeeming activity is exercised in a future age. We are not surprised. His administration is from everlasting to everlasting.

Such a consideration does not mitigate, in my view, the Father's solicitude for the salvation of His children now. We almost hear His sigh as He says, "How can I give thee up?" And again he says, "O that Israel had hearkened to my commandments!" And this divine solicitude was expressed in human tears when the Son sobbed over the apostate city: "O, if thou hadst only known in this thy day the things that belong to thy peace!"

DESTINED FOR A BETTER WORLD.

I will refer here to one practical difficulty, which is solved by the theory of Restoration. We all know Christian men of whose real goodness we have no doubt whatever. But such a man has often great imperfections. There can be no doubt that he is destined for a better world; but in the meantime he is not fit for it. Such a man, we will say, meets with an accident that cuts him off in a moment. The question is, Where does he go? On the old theory he must go either to heaven or to hell. But he is really fit for neither. The work of grace is far from being completed in him, and therefore he is not prepared for the better world. But he has the germ of grace in him, and it is partly developed; therefore he would be out of place in the better world. Then where does he go? The difficulty is settled at once if we suppose that there is a preparatory stage of preparation for eternal joy. He will arrive at the goal in due time; but meantime he must have his faults and imperfections pruned off. Death will certainly not effect the necessary improvement. All are agreed that the fact of dying makes no change in a man's character. Nor is there any change usually effected just before death. In many cases there is no opportunity. "The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness." So says the Catechism. But there is no evidence of it in the case of one who is stricken down suddenly. But suppose there is a preparatory stage beyond; then all difficulty disappears.

THRUST INTO NEW CONDITIONS.

Nor would it be in harmony with divine operations, so far as we know them, to thrust a frail, human, imperfect spirit into eternal joys so suddenly. He is not prepared for them. He requires a preliminary stage of preparation. It is only in harmony with what we know of God's methods to believe that such is provided. When a child is born into this world, it is not thrust into new conditions suddenly. For a time it is not even aware that it has entered on new conditions; but it adapts itself naturally and easily to its new surroundings. So it is not easy to believe that a soul accustomed to the darkness of earth is thrust at once into the blinding glory of heaven. A preliminary stage of preparation seems to be necessary; and if it is necessary, it is provided.

I raised this difficulty once to an aged minister. At that time I saw no solution of it, and I simply wanted information. He studied a moment and then said, "When the flesh is put off, I think many of our sins and imperfections will go along with it." That was a wise answer, and there is a great deal of comfort in it. But it does not fully meet the case. The flesh is a lodging place for many of our sins, and it is a happy thing to think that we shall drop these sins when we drop the flesh. But there are sins of the mind too; and these we shall not drop with the flesh. They will go with us into the next life. The

question is. How shall we get rid of them? The idea of Restoration solves all difficulty.

Besides, we believe that nothing that is really good will ever perish from the universe. In the case we have supposed, the man possessed real goodness; but it was largely goodness in the germ; it needed to be developed. It is only congenial with what we know of divine operations to believe that what is good will be developed, rather than that it will decay into nothingness. From that point of view a preliminary stage of progress seems to be necessary.

I have just met with a lecture by Sir Oliver Lodge, in which he espouses the same idea in a scientific relation. He quotes from Professor Höffding, who agrees with Browning and other poets, that no real value or good is ever lost. Sir Oliver Lodge says that "the law of evolution is that good should on the whole increase in the universe, with the process of the suns." He says again, "Nothing really perishes in the universe that is worth keeping."

ARTISTIC ACHIEVEMENT.

And in this matter he does not confine himself to material things. The same law applies, as he says, to "personality, beauty, artistic achievement, knowledge, unselfish affection" and so on. So he really rises into the domain of the moral and spiritual. Regarded in this light, no incipient goodness acquired in this life will ever die. It will be developed, and in order to its development, there must be some means of development beyond the bourne of time.

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We might suppose another case that will bring this principle clearly into view. A house has taken fire. The fire has made great headway, and the house is likely to be destroyed. The whole town has gathered around—some out of curiosity, others from sympathy. The inmates are supposed to be all rescued. But at length a child appears at one of the upper windows. A cry of consternation and of sympathy goes up from the whole throng. How can the child be delivered? The room is lighted by the flames. Clearly the time for action is short. The longest available ladder is placed against the house, but it is a little too short. The whole crowd is in dismay. Must the child perish in the flames? Above the crackling of the fire is heard its piteous cries. Will no one make the attempt to save it? The multitude is painfully irresolute; the case seems hopeless.

FIRM AND QUICK TREAD.

At length a man starts from the middle of the crowd. He is a common, ill-clad, laboring man. The grime of his day's work is upon him. Resolutely he goes forward, pushing the bystanders to the right and left. With firm and quick tread he ascends the ladder. At the top he stands for a moment irresolute. Is it possible to reach the window? It seems impossible. But he makes a spring for it, and by an almost superhuman effort he gains it. He rescues the child.; with great risk he regains the ladder, and begins the descent. He is nerved by the cheers of the crowd; but when about half way down his strength gives way, and he falls. The child escapes all danger, but the rescuer has received fatal injuries; his neck is broken.

Now the question is, where does he go? He was not a Christian. The old theology would say that therefore he goes to hell. We cannot believe it. We have enough of the divine image in us yet to revolt at such a thought. Then let us beware of extinguishing that divine light in our souls. As Carlyle says, "Come out of it, all honest men!"

We have seen that it is a divine law that what is good will survive. Then will the noble qualities in this moral hero have no chance of survival and development? It is true that he is not a Christian. No; but he is a far better man than many Christians. We would expect therefore that he will be subjected to some process of education by which he will rise to the place where he really belongs.

EVERY POSSIBLE ARGUMENT.

If Dr. Adam Clarke had only been imbued with such an idea, he would not have required to labor so hard as he has done in trying to make out a hopeful prospect for Judas. With a truly charitable intent he summons every possible argument in support of the idea that Judas was truly penitent, and that he was saved in his last hour. He may have been; I do not say. But the idea of Restoration opens a far wider door of hope. In that case, there is no need for far-fetched argument. He will be restored, as the worst criminal of mankind will be. The theory of Restoration settles all difficulty.

Closely allied with this case of Judas is the case of all suicides. If we were now holding an inquest on

Judas, I suppose our verdict would be that he committed suicide in a fit of temporary insanity. And perhaps he did. At all events it is the most charitable verdict at which we can arrive. Many suicides in all fairness deserve this mantle of charity. And there is more than charity in reserve for all such. We believe there is an opportunity of development which many of them could not have in this life.

And so we may well believe it will be with lunatics. The reasonable view is, that they will begin just where they left off. As they are, they are not fit for the better world; and it would be unjust to send them to a world of woe. Some were idiots from their birth, and so have acquired no evil propensities of which to be divested. In other cases the idiocy was simply due to a clot on the brain. They have left their bodies behind them now, and the clot too. They simply begin at the point where their reason deserted them; and it will come back in due time.

It is a very nice point to determine where insanity begins. I was discussing this question lately with the Superintendent of a large lunatic asylum. We agreed that, while putting no premium on crime, we have to recognize that in many cases there is no real responsibility where in general it would be expected. The whole study of lunacy strongly indicates that there is a necessity for a process of elimination and development under more favorable conditions than the present life ordinarily supplies. And we may be sure that if there is such a necessity, it is provided.

In this connection I think of Blind Tom. He was a very prodigy in music. But apart from that he was a complete idiot, and had been so from his birth. After his death a gentleman who knew him well wrote a sketch of his life. In the noble, concluding words of that article I think we would all heartily join, be our creed what it may. The writer says of Tom: "Blind, deformed, and black, as black as Erebus—idiocy, the idiocy of a mysterious, perpetual frenzy, the sole companion of his waking visions and his dreams—whence came he, and was he, and wherefore? That there was a soul there, be sure, imprisoned, chained, in that little black bosom, released at last; gone to the angels, not to imitate the seraph-songs of heaven, but to join the Choir Invisible for ever and for ever."

Surely this abnormal gift of the poor idiot is a strong suggestion of his immortality. We refuse to think of that divine spark being quenched in everlasting night. And it is almost more impossible to imagine a wholly irresponsible being like him, yet endowed with such a divine gift, being consigned to endless torment. What remains, then, for him but a part in the better world? Yet he was by no means fit for that better world. Is there not then almost forced upon us the idea of a preliminary stage of education? And if that is so in his case, is it not more or less required in the case of every one of us? Think the matter over seriously, and see where it will land you.

XII.

A FEEBLE NOTE OF WARNING.

The Creed of Eternal Torment—Do Ministers Really Believe It—If They Do, Why Not Say So?—No Decisive Note of Warning—Definite Missionary Incentive Is Wanting—The Phrase "Eternal Death" often Used—Does It Mean Eternal Annihilation, or Eternal Torment, or What?—Vague Reference as to Punishment Fosters Unbelief—An Age of Compromise—Professor Faulkner's Testimony—The Idea of Restoration Would Wholly Meet the Difficulty—Honesty and Candor—Carlyle's Scathing Warning—Ultimate Fulfillment of Prophecy—Eternal Songs.

If the doctrine of everlasting punishment is true, there has been of late years a singular reserve on the part of preachers in proclaiming it. Why? Surely "all doctrine is profitable." This doctrine would seem to me to be specially so, if it is true. It is contained in the creed of both the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. But do the ministers believe it? If they do, would they not preach it; yes, preach it morning, noon, and night? But as a matter of fact they do not preach it. I never heard a sermon on it, or any attempt to prove it, since I was a child. A short time ago in a large congregation the minister asked for a show of hands on the part of any who had heard a sermon on hell during the last ten years. Two hands were held up.

Some time ago a noted Methodist minister told me that the Methodist ministers of Canada do not believe in Everlasting Punishment. A prominent official of that church told me lately that he does not

believe it, but that if it were known he would lose his position.

The Presbyterian ministers seem largely to hold the same view. Is the subject mooted at all in any Presbyterian Church? I know that ministers profess to believe it; but they seem as apathetic about multitudes dropping continually into eternal fire as if they did not believe it. Privately, I have spoken on this subject with many ministers; and not one of them professed to believe it.

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Now, my plea is for honesty and candor. Let us be assured that Truth will not suffer by being avowed and defended. The matter is of the greatest importance just now. It has a most vital relation to Missions. I rejoice in the Laymen's Missionary Movement; but I fear it will wane if this most important question is not approached, and if possible rightly settled. For we want to know what the heathen are to be saved from, if there is going to be an adequate and sustained incentive to liberality and enterprise.

In all the reports of the meetings of the Laymen's Missionary Movement, I have seen no hint of the alternative before the heathen if they are not evangelised. I heard a minister lately speaking of them as 'miserable failures going out into the darkness.' What did he mean? It seemed to me an unworthy evasion of the question.

And now it is proposed to put in the creed of the proposed union of the churches that the doom of the finally impenitent will be 'eternal death,' What does that mean? It may mean either External Extinction or Eternal Torment. Is the union to be built on such ambiguity? Would not such ambiguity pave the way for future dissension? Herein we see the folly of putting too much in a creed, forgetting that 'more light is yet to break out of God's holy Word,' and that any human creed may yet have to be revised. And we are slow to make revisions, for revisions seem to reflect on views that we may have strenuously defended.

Julia Ward Howe, the gifted authoress of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," had recently a "vision" of a regenerated world. She exulted in the prospect of a day of grace. But not once does she seem to cast a backward glance on the myriads of our race who are supposed to be in endless torment. Surely, that would have dimmed the glorious forecast. It may be that she does not believe in torment, or that she believes in final Restoration. In either case she would be consistent, and nothing would seriously mar the joy of her anticipation.

But such a mantle of charity is not available for certain orthodox ministers. They, too, forecast a final day of grace, and paint it in the most glorious colors. There appears to be nothing to mitigate their joy. But all the while they profess to believe in eternal torment. Their creed says that uncounted myriads of our fellow creatures are writhing in eternal fire, and that their torment will go on forever and ever, without any hope of mitigation. Surely, the very thought of such suffering would cast a pall of unspeakable gloom over the most glorious anticipation? No, not at all. Not for a moment does the black shadow intervene. How are we to account for that? I can think of only two ways; either that there is no imagination to realize the horror, or else that it is not really believed.

This painting of a roseate future, conjoined with a professed belief in endless torment, savors to me somewhat of unreality. The two things do not hang together. Surely, if such torment is but realized, it would cast a pall of gloom even over heaven's joy. But let such torment be abolished in fact and in conception, and the last vestige of gloom goes along with it.

And what necessity is there for retaining the idea? Is there any barrier in eternal justice? Surely, there cannot be, since Christ has paid a penalty of infinite value for every soul of man. And is there any limit to divine love? That love is infinite, and embraces the very worst of our race. But perhaps there is no method by which eternal love can take due effect? Will not infinite wisdom find a way? If there is any difficulty left, calling for the exercise of infinite power, surely, it is not beyond Him whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting? Is it not thus reasonable to believe that all possible difficulties will yet be solved? The infinite One who rules all worlds is from everlasting to everlasting. His government may require time to evolve His gracious designs; but He will do all His pleasure. Therefore, we believe the day will come when sin and suffering shall be entirely done away. This is the

"Far off divine event
To which the whole creation moves."

It will be remembered that I cited the case of the conversion of Saul as an instance of divine power subduing in a moment the most extreme and violent wickedness. The chief of sinners became the chief of saints. Yes; but the man never lost his freedom. In recounting that experience he could say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." This union of divine constraint and human freedom is an

everlasting mystery; but not the less is it a glorious fact.

Now, why should not the same principles hold in the next life? The wickedness of a sinner may possibly be even more intense than now; but the overcoming love, and power, and wisdom will be infinite. What, then, should hinder their ultimate triumph? Certainly, not the most terrible wickedness of puny man. It is but finite at the worst, and is no match for the infinite love and power of God. And then consider that the redeeming blood of Christ will be of infinite value then as now, and so will be available for the worst. What a prospect of universal Restoration is opened up here to our faith!

But there may still lurk in some minds the idea that divine love is limited to this life, and that justice alone will rule in the next. They have an idea of different dispensations; they say that this is the dispensation of probation; that the next life is the dispensation of rewards and punishments; and so on. Well, there may be a truth in that, and a wholesome truth, too. But let it ever be remembered that the character of God is unchangeable. What we call dispensations are but epochs in the divine government. But the qualities of God's character will never change. His love is from everlasting to everlasting; so is His power; so is His wisdom. Will these qualities of His character be inoperative in a future life, when there will be such sin and suffering to appeal to them? However great the sin may be, surely divine love, wisdom, and power will be infinitely greater.

And I cannot forbear adding this consideration: What would Christ think of the atoning sacrifice that He made for the sin of the whole race, if the whole race is not ultimately redeemed? But it was said of Him, "He shall be satisfied." Yes; He shall be satisfied. Divine Love will win.

Lately, a little book was published on the subject of missions. The author is earnest, even to intensity. He says the Church is "sleeping." He deplors its "deadly apathy," He says that "a thousand millions" have not heard of the Saviour. He says that "a Christless multitude" dies at the rate of thirty millions a year. He says that "many millions have gone to Christless graves." He says that for these uncounted millions "death and the future are the very blackness of despair." He says that for twenty centuries these millions have been "perishing." Phrases such as these are multiplied to a vast extent, to awaken our horror of the situation.

But singular to say, the author does not seem to have any definite, positive ideas as to the actual doom of these uncounted millions; or, if he has any definite convictions, he does not definitely express them. Is it eternal extinction or everlasting torment? From the phrases he uses I cannot gather what he actually means. He speaks of a "Christless multitude" and "Christless graves," and "going into darkness," and the "blackness of despair." It may be that he deems it wise not to compromise himself by speaking out his definite conviction, if he has any. But in my view, he will not produce much of a worthy effect if he does not say definitely what he means. Or it may be that he has no definite idea. In that case, would it not be manly and candid to say that he does not know?

I believe that is the position of very many. They are hovering between the idea of extinction and that of torment. They try to believe in torment; they have been inoculated with that idea; they think, or are afraid, that it is Scriptural; but they recoil from any hearty reception of it. They have not got the length as yet of the idea of final salvation. But some day that truth may flash upon their souls like a gleam of heaven's own sunlight.

To come back to our author. He tries to give us a due incentive to awake from our apathy, and enter on a Missionary Crusade with a spirit of self-denial and zeal never yet known. He quotes two passages, which he presents as a very strong incentive. But neither of these passages has any force, on the theory either of extinction or of torment. Otherwise, they are pregnant with eternal hope. Listen: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Again: "He, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." Neither of those passages can come true on the basis either of extinction or of endless torment. But they will come gloriously true on the basis of final salvation.

So the "millions" and "billions" that our author says have been "going out into the darkness," and into the "blackness of despair," are redeemed as well as we. The author himself says: "Jesus wants every one of these poor creatures told at once of Him and His love." Now, if that is His wish, is He going to be thwarted by any coldness or indifference of ours? We may fail in our duty; but is He going to fail? A thousand times, No! He has all power and all love, as well as all eternity, in which to work out His glorious designs. We cannot conceive of Him as being "satisfied" with either extinction or endless torment. No; the day of grace for the millions and billions will come. "He will be satisfied." His "expecting" will be realized. What wonders of redeeming love eternity will reveal!

In the meantime, our author furnishes no effective incentive to missionary effort.

When the idea of final salvation is generally accepted, I believe there will be awakened an enthusiasm

for missions such as the world has never seen.

Since writing the above, I have unexpectedly been in a large missionary meeting where two noted men of the Methodist Church were the chief speakers. Both addresses were most fervid and eloquent. But I noticed that neither of the speakers had any note of definiteness in regard to the fate of the heathen after death. It did seem to me that one of them came once very near to the idea of eternal extinction, but did not candidly commit himself to it. The other seemed to approach the theory of torment, but drew back. The whole performance, eloquent though it was, seemed to me largely shorn of its effectiveness of appeal, because of its indefiniteness. Surely, we want to know what doom the heathen are to be saved from, if we are to be moved to any adequate enterprise or liberality. The few small coins on the collection plates on the occasion referred to, bore unmistakable testimony to the fact that the fervid appeals had produced a very meagre result.

If men really believe in everlasting torment, why do they not plainly say so? If it is true, surely it is the strongest motive that could be urged on behalf of missions. Perhaps ministers think that the time is not yet come for an avowal of the larger view, and that in the meantime it is wise not to commit themselves. But is not that very much the same as to say that they are waiting for the current of popular favor before they dare to be faithful? And does it not argue a want of faith in the truth as a sanctifying and saving power? And is further truth likely to be revealed to us if we deliberately shut our minds to such light as is offered? I say, let the truth prevail, though the heavens should fall.

By the way, one of the gentlemen referred to uses the phrase "eternal death," as many do. I wonder what they mean? It is an ambiguous phrase. It might mean endless torment after death; or it might mean annihilation at death; or it might mean annihilation at some future time. It is surely misleading to use a phrase that may have so many meanings. If some definite idea cannot be advanced, I think the effect will be that the whole matter will be regarded as uncertain, and that there is nothing to fear. And such I believe is largely the position of the Christian world to-day. Could not a consensus of doctrine be arrived at by the various Christian churches—a consensus founded on the best interpretation of the Word; and also on reason?

Only last Sunday I heard a sermon on success in life. And it was a better and more spiritual sermon than many that we hear on that subject. The preacher strongly commended the Bible as the best text book on success; and he was earnest and positive in his distinction between right and wrong. But he gave no hint that evil doers would have any punishment in the next life. In fact, he made no allusion to a next life at all, except in one instance where he spoke of multitudes of men going out into the next life as "miserable failures." Why did he not speak of endless torment? That is one article in his creed; but he seemed not to believe it. A few earnest sentences along that line would have been more effectual, in my view, than his entire sermon.

Or, if he does not believe in endless torment, does he not believe in Restoration? Might he not have uttered some warnings along that line? Surely, it is a tremendous conviction to give a sinful man, that if he does not repent in this life he must do so in the next, though it takes thousands of years, and untold penalties, to bring him to that state of mind. But not a word of this terror did the preacher utter. That would be a repudiation of the endless torment theory, which would be unorthodox, and possibly subject the preacher himself to pains and penalties. So he simply said nothing by way of warning, except failure in this life. And that does not seem to amount to very much after all. Is it worth while to preach a sermon about it? Would not the old philosophy be almost as good, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die?"

Would it not be better to take the suffering incident to the Restoration theory, and be positive about it as a warning rather than the vague and half-hearted reference to eternal punishment, or the omission of any reference to it whatever? The manner in which it is referred to, when spoken of at all, gives one the strong impression that it is not believed. For, if believed, it would certainly not be preached in any vague or heartless way. Even the lurid representations of hell that formerly prevailed, were possibly better; for at least they were sincere.

But it may be said that we have no details of the suffering incident to Restoration, and that therefore such a warning cannot be used with effect. I would say that neither have we any details of endless torment. So the same argument applies. I would say further that we have very meagre details of heavenly joy. But that does not prevent our belief in it. Let it be clearly understood that a knowledge of details is not necessary to belief. It is purely a matter of revelation. There may be good reasons why details are not given. The fact is enough for the present; details will be known in due time.

So the sermon I have referred to related wholly to worldly success, with a mere glance at the possibility of a future life, which in reality favored unbelief. The whole sermon struck me as a kind of religious exploitation of materialism.

Just now I have met with a magazine article in which the phrase "eternal death" is used. The author is an eminent Presbyterian minister, whom I know well. I really could not understand his meaning. I wrote to him asking whether he meant eternal extinction or eternal torment; or whether he threw out the phrase loosely, leaving his readers to take whichever view they chose. Here is his reply:

"I thank you for your kind reference to my articles on the Sunday School Lesson, and note your question about the phrase, 'Eternal Death,' The meaning of the phrase in my mind is largely determined by the meaning of the corresponding phrase, 'Eternal Life.' In His use of the latter phrase, our Lord evidently lays emphasis, not upon the thought of duration, but upon that of quality. Eternal Life is a certain kind of life which He gives to His people now. Similarly, Eternal Death is a state in which people may exist even while they are in this world. It is eternal in regard to duration in this sense, that it has no awakening; its tendency is to persist forever. But that is not to say that God cannot bring one from a state of eternal death into that of eternal life. I do not know whether I have made myself clear, but it is somewhat in this way that the matter presents itself to my mind."

So I am not really much the wiser, except that the reply tends to confirm my opinion as to the ambiguous way in which the phrase is often used.

In my view, such ambiguity is unfortunate in any case, but more especially so when it is used with regard to our eternal future; and even more so when it is used in an article, as in this case, avowedly for children. Does it not lead directly to scepticism? And even if it did not, is it not rather a cruel thing to put upon children the onus of deciding a question of such tremendous importance? Would it not be better to say candidly that we do not know?

To be sure, it may be said that the church is in a state of transition on this question, and that it is better to wait for the church's final decision. But in the meantime, and we do not know for how long, we are sowing the seeds of scepticism. Besides; this avowed waiting for the church's final decision may be only a pious pretense, because of want of courage to declare honest conviction. I say so because I have spoken with many ministers whose convictions are most decidedly contrary to the orthodox doctrines; but there is a marked hesitation in publicly avowing them. Is this expediency or cowardice? What we want is more charity to treat this as an open question, so that men might explore the whole realm of truth, and express their honest convictions without fear.

I see that the Chairman of the London Congregational Union deplores this general lack of warning. He quotes the late Dr. Dale as saying, "No one fears God now."

I have just heard an impassioned address, pleading for men and money to evangelize the multitudes that are pouring into the great North West of Canada. It was natural for the speaker to lay great stress on human effort; but I thought he might have made a casual reference to the Spirit of God as supreme; yet not a word did he utter on that topic. For the most part he presented no higher incentive than the development of character, and the building up of the empire on a foundation of righteousness. But not a word did he utter in regard to the penalty of sin after death on the part of the immigrants, if we fail to give them the Gospel. In fact, there was no hint at all of immortality.

Yet the speaker is a Presbyterian minister who professes to believe in eternal torment. But not a word did he say on that topic. Surely, he might have found the supreme incentive there. It strikes me that a few earnest words along that line would have had more effect than his entire address. That is, if the doctrine of eternal torment is true, and if the preacher believes it. But in all fairness, does not the conviction force itself upon us that he does not believe it? Why, then, does he not say so? Especially, why does he not say so when he is pleading for missions? He is afraid, perhaps, of pains and penalties. Or he may try to convince himself that it is wiser not to be too outspoken; that there is a time for everything; that he might do more harm than good; and so on.

But the truth is divine. No good can come of its suppression, especially on a matter of such eternal moment. And how can we look for further light, if we are unfaithful to the light we have? And what about the character of duplicity we are fostering in our own souls in the name of righteousness?

Listen to these scathing words of warning spoken by Caryle. He says: "What is incredible to thee, thou shalt not at thy soul's peril attempt to believe."

How will it fare with any church that acts so? Will not the light that is in her be darkness? How can we expect to receive growing divine illuminations if we affect to believe what we are convinced is untrue? Would it not be wiser and safer to put all the orthodox Confessions on the shelf—yes, on the top shelf—and take instead such a simple creed as this: "We believe the Scripture to be the Word of God." Then, though we might differ, we would not be afraid to avow, our convictions, and we would not be accounted heretics. Let the dead past bury its dead.

There is another serious consideration. When one of the heathen is converted, especially an intelligent one, how would it do to put into his hands our orthodox Confessions of Faith? Would he not stumble at the doctrine of endless torment? He would think reasonably, of course; not like ourselves who are so dominated by tradition. Then, I say, would he not stumble? If we tried to substantiate the doctrine, would it not be a serious impediment to his faith? On the other hand, if we tried to explain it away, would he not think us a lot of hypocrites?

Professor Faulkner, of Toronto University, said lately, and I think truly, that one reason why theology is now under a cloud, is that men are afraid of heresy. Surely, nothing could be more unfortunate than to carry this spirit into missions.

We do hope that the missionary campaign lately launched will have great success. Only we would like it if it had been launched on a higher plane. It is worthy of the highest.

We are often told that there are a thousand millions of heathen; and our creed teaches us that they are dropping into hell every day. What could be so compelling a motive in any missionary enterprise as to save some of 'them from such a fate? But it is never mentioned. Is it believed? Certainly, we profess to believe it. But do we? If we do, would it not be the paramount, compelling motive? But instead of that, the main idea is to convert the heathen from savagery to civilization. Make them good citizens—that is the idea. Especially in regard to the influx of immigrants, there seldom seems to be no higher motive than to make them worthy of this great country. I have read just now an article in one of our religious papers, which affects to be very earnest, but to me it seems a mere outburst of quasi-patriotism.

Now is it not time to be honest? The trouble is, that men are afraid to be. We have put the doctrine of endless torment in the Confession, both of the Methodist and of the Presbyterian Churches, and we are afraid to go back on it for fear of the pains and penalties of the church. Moreover, we do not like to confess that for ages we were wrong; and it seems disloyal to go back on the fathers who framed these confessions. So we hang on to them in theory, but repudiate them in fact. Is it not so?

Now, what is the compelling power in all missionary enterprise? To those who believe in endless torment, surely the controlling motive is to save the millions of heathen from such a fate. Both the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches profess to believe in that doctrine. But the singular thing is, that in neither church is it preached. The suspicion is, that it is not believed. And this is more than a suspicion. I myself have heard no sermon on hell, nor any definite reference to it, since I was a child. A Methodist minister in Canada, largely in touch with his brethren, told me lately most positively, that Methodist ministers do not believe in endless torment. Many Presbyterian ministers with whom I have spoken take the same ground.

Now, it is a hard thing to say that a doctrine of such eternal moment is openly professed, yet inwardly repudiated. But if it were really believed, would it not be preached—yes, preached morning, noon, and night? For there are reckoned to be a thousand millions of heathen in distant lands, besides all the other millions that we have here at home. So all these heathen are supposed to be dropping by the thousand into hell every day. And consider; there are a thousand millions of them, and their number is continually increasing.

Would it not then be the main incentive to give these uncounted millions the Gospel, in order to save them from such a doom? There may be other considerations; but in all consistency, is not this the pressing one? Yet not once have I heard this matter referred to in any late missionary address. There was a little spiritual truth in them all. But the chief motive presented was, to convert the heathen from savagery to civilization. So the whole performance usually seemed to me not much more than an exploitation of materialism.

Then, if ministers do not believe in endless torment, why do they not say so? I can imagine two reasons. First, as I have said, there is the fear of pains and penalties. A man may lose his position; and that is a serious consideration. Then there is an unwillingness to go back on the fathers who framed these creeds.

But do either or both of these reasons justify conscientious men in suppressing a truth of such momentous importance? A thousand times, No! Candor and honesty first; veneration for the fathers after. Would it not conduce to real success if this matter were maturely and honestly considered? It might arouse some amount of disunion and debate. But would it not lift the whole tone of the missionary movement to a far higher plane? And might we not believe that it would lead to more sustained effort, and far greater success?

At all events, there is one matter well worth considering. How can the Spirit of Truth lead us into larger visions of Truth if we willingly, tamper with our most sacred convictions? Let us remember that

there are growing revelations. May we be of an open mind, and so in an attitude to receive them!

It does seem to me that much of the activity of the evangelical churches is in a large measure discounted by this want of candor. If earnest men only knew how amenable the world would become to the Gospel, and what a glad day they would usher in when they would candidly renounce the doctrine of endless torment, I believe the majority would do it. Surely, this would be one of the brightest days that has ever dawned on the world.

Just now I have had a strange experience. On a certain Sabbath morning I opened the Bible at random at the eleventh chapter of the Romans. That, you know, is the great chapter about the Restoration of the Jews. I had read some verses of that chapter, when there flashed on my mind the idea that here we have a most profound argument for spiritual Restoration. I had not been thinking at all of Restoration at the time; but here the subject was forced upon me in quite a new light. As I read on, that conviction grew. From the point of view of Restoration, the argument of the apostle seemed coherent, profound, glorious. From any other standpoint it seemed to me, and had always seemed, a mystery. All mystery was cleared up now. The Restoration of God's favored people is clearly foretold; but orthodoxy had never thought of locating the event in the next life. But it has ever been a great tax on men's ingenuity to show how the event can occur in this life. For we cannot ignore facts, and facts are all against such a conception.

Even if in future generations the Jews who are then living are all turned to God, as we believe they will, what about the millions and millions who have died? The enigma receives a glorious solution when we realize that the future life is to be the time of the Restoration. Oh, yes; the prophecy will be fulfilled; God's ancient people will be restored. Divine power and grace are not limited to this short epoch of time; they are from everlasting to everlasting. Surely, here is a theme for heaven's eternal songs!

XIII.

PROPHECIES YET TO BE FULFILLED.

Enlarging Vision—Promise to Abraham—A Host of Similar Promises —Many of them Not Merely National—Their Fulfillment—Not Limited by the Short Epoch of Time—The Present Only One Part of the Divine Administration—Why the Revelation Was Not Given Sooner—Groping in the Twilight—Growing Illumination—A Time for Everything—Dazzle or Enlighten—Discoveries in Science and Revelation—Our Slowness in Receiving Spiritual Truth—Limitations of Great Men.

If reason, even when based on revelation, still appears to you a very fallible guide, will you please take note of some direct promises contained in revelation itself? And I would ask you to consider how these promises could ever come true apart from Restoration. There are glorious promises that are partly or wholly of a local or national character. These that I shall cite now are not to be so restricted. They have a far grander sweep and application. No doubt the writers of them may not have been conscious of their full import. But that is the nature of revelation. It grows in meaning from age to age. And the noontide glory of those promises is beginning to break on our larger vision.

Take the words spoken to Abraham: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." To realize that this promise was of no mere national importance, listen to the way in which Paul applies it in his Epistle to the Galatians. He says: "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

Now has that promise been fulfilled? Since Abraham's time have not millions and millions of the families of the earth passed out into darkness unblessed? Other millions of families are passing away now, without having once heard the Saviour's name. And other millions deliberately reject Him. Certainly, all these millions are unblessed, In their case the promise has not been fulfilled. But it will be fulfilled. Beyond the bourne of time it will come true. This glorious enlargement of the scope of the promise takes away all difficulty, and fills us with joy and praise.

The other passages that I shall quote bear the same way, but we shall not stay to make any comment on them. I would ask you to think them over seriously; disarm your mind as far as possible from prejudice; let the glorious truth prevail. Ponder such passages as these:

"All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."

"As the new heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord."

"All nations whom thou hast made shall come and worship before thee, O Lord; and shall glorify thy name."

"All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God."

"In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory."

"I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the ends of the earth."

"His name shall endure forever; it shall be continued as long as the sun; men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed."

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Saviour which is Christ the Lord."

"It is written in the book of the prophet Esaias, All flesh shall see the salvation of God."

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

"Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee."

"All Israel shall be saved."

"And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing and honor and glory and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

Such are some of the Scripture forecasts of the final day of grace. Men have tried to confine the realization of such promises to the present life. But they will not be so confined. The vast scheme of grace extends far beyond the narrow span of time. Only conceive of the fulfillment of such glorious hopes as being extended into the next age. Such a prospect begins to appear to be truly worthy of God. And surely, the news of such an enlarged scheme of salvation is the most joyful that ever fell on mortal ears. Men of the most devout and reverent spirit are beginning to take these larger views. The day is breaking; soon the shadows will flee away.

If such promises as we have quoted seem too general, or merely national, just confine your attention to a few which are evidently of a far wider scope.

Christ says he will draw all men to Himself. Then He must do so in the next life; for certainly He is not doing so now. But His word will stand. He will do all His pleasure. It is a marvel that the Christian world has taken so long to see this promise in its glorious fulness.

In harmony with the statement just referred to, we read in Isaiah that "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Are not these wonderful words? How are they to be explained? The travail of His soul! Who can fathom that abyss of woe? The very words are suggestive of untold agony. I believe that at the last He touched a depth of woe which no man or angel has sounded.

But He shall have a recompense that will satisfy Him. Does not that point to the salvation of the whole race? Would anything less satisfy Him? Does He not say that He came to save the world? And will anything less satisfy Him? Certainly He is not satisfied now. The moiety of mankind that is saved now, or to be saved to the end of time, will not satisfy Him. No! His divine love embraces the whole race.

What then about the uncounted millions who never heard of Him? What about the millions that are dying now, and that never heard the music of His name? Is not every one of them in the divine scheme of salvation? Their time will come. The Saviour's operations are not limited to one age. His love is from everlasting to everlasting; and so are the means at His disposal. In this age we see but the beginning of

the outgoings of His grace. We cannot conceive of Him being satisfied till the last soul of the human race is redeemed.

I shall not go farther along this line than simply to remind you that it is written that God will be "all in all." That is a wonderful expression when we look into it. What does it really mean? Does it not mean that God will be all in all? That is—He will be everything in everybody. I take it that this is the real meaning of the words, Everything in everybody! O mystery of love and power divine!

I apprehend that the significance of the words "all in all" is not fully appreciated or understood. See, for instance, the way in which the words are used in that hymn, "That Christ is all in all to me."

The words, "all in all to me" seem to be used as an attempt to emphasize the force of the sentiment, "all to me." That is, He satisfies my every want. But I apprehend that the words have a much larger meaning than that. It is not myself alone, but everybody that is concerned here. It is that Christ is everything to every human soul. Everything that He is, is made over to everybody. What a glorious expansion of the words! "All in all," that is, everything in everybody. Was there ever such an infinite wealth of meaning packed into a few short words?

UNCOUNTED MILLIONS.

Or, take the message which the angels brought down to earth on the occasion of the Saviour's birth. They told the shepherds that they brought good tidings of great joy to all people. What, then, about the uncounted millions of our race who had departed this life without ever having heard of a Saviour? If they were either in hopeless torment, or in extinction, how could the Saviour's coming be good tidings to them? And what about the millions that were then living in heathenism, and would die in heathenism? How could the Saviour's coming be good tidings to them? And what about the millions that are living now, and the other millions that will be born who will die without hearing of a Saviour? How could His advent be good tidings to those? And what about the other millions in Christian lands, who will live and die without any saving power being brought into their life? How could the Saviour's birth be good tidings to any of these myriads of our race?

Only on the theory that the benefits of His coming extend into the next life, could the words be true. If these uncounted millions are in endless torment, or if they are annihilated, the words could not be true. But they are gloriously true if there is a future state of probation. In that case the benefits of the Saviour's life and death extend beyond human life to those myriads who never heard of Him here.

THE GLADDEST MESSAGE.

The angels knew something of the glad purport of their words. Likely they saw this day of grace beyond the bourne of time. I cannot conceive of any other basis on which the words would be true. It was the gladdest message that ever fell on mortal ears, if we take it in this wide application. Likely these angels were able to exult in the prospect of every human soul being redeemed.

In harmony with the passage referred to, we have the intimation that Christ will draw all men to Himself. That promise cannot be restricted to the present life. Christ has not drawn all men to Himself. He has not drawn more than a moiety of the human race. But He says He will draw all mankind. That was the prospect that sustained Him. He had a full view of all future ages as well as the present; and He knew what means He would use through all coming time for the accomplishment of His purpose.

The present is only one small part of His administration. He gives no hint of the means that He will use in future aeons for the fulfillment of His designs. That is not for us to know in this life. Indeed such a revelation would only confuse and bewilder us. For consider how such a revelation might involve the revelation of a great many other things far beyond us to understand.

We are confused enough as it is, with the revelation that we have. Witness the unfolding meaning of revelation from age to age. We realize that enough has been revealed to tax the growing powers of the race. How completely all our thoughts would be drowned if we were given the programme of the ages beyond.

NO SMALLER MEANING.

No; our Lord does a much wiser and kinder thing. By one simple sentence he opens the door of everlasting hope. He says He will draw all men to Himself; but He does not tell us how or when. Those are matters for faith, not for revelation. We can take no smaller meaning from this glorious promise, distort it as men will, to make it fit into some preconceived theory.

Again, we would enquire, apart from all theories to be sustained, what is the meaning of those wonderful words:

"All Israel shall be saved." I know there is a roundabout way of explaining that statement, apart from the idea of Restoration. But it seems far-fetched and strained. When once we grasp the theory of Restoration, the words seem natural and harmonious with the whole argument.

We see that such promises cannot refer to the present life. If they do, what about the Jews of the olden time who lapsed so often into the grossest sin? What about the tears of Christ over the apostate city? What about the present condition of that race? Are they saved? No! they still repudiate the name of Christ. Do they become extinct when they die? Or do they go into everlasting torment? In either event they could not be saved as promised. Or will they be restored in due time? On no other supposition can we conceive of the words coming true.

To this theory I can conceive of an objection, which at the first glance may seem a formidable one. It is this: If the theory is true, why did it not dawn on the world sooner? Especially when we consider what a boon it would have been to the race, and what a dark mantle of gloom it would have lifted from the heart of the world, why did God withhold the light so long? Surely there were saints and seers of the olden time who were worthy to be media of such a communication. And surely the generations of the past needed such a spiritual uplift as much as we do to-day. Yet for ages and ages the revelation was not given. Men had to grope in the twilight for centuries, until at length the illumination dawned on a few souls. But the reputed wise men of the world did not hail with joy the new illumination, but generally treated it as a new presumption. And however agreeable with reason and with Scripture it may be shown to be, it will likely not be universally accepted for ages to come. If the theory is really true, and if it comes from God, the Source of all light, why was this poor world not blessed with it sooner?

I say, that objection may appear a formidable one at the first glance. Let us examine it with all fairness and candor.

In the first place, I would say that it is not God's way to give us His revelations all at once. No, not even when He inspires men to write them. Those revelations have a primitive meaning, suited for men of a primitive age. But as the ages go on, and men become more developed, there breaks on them more light from the Word. And that light is brighter very often than even the original writers apprehended. They built better than they knew, for they were writing, not for their own age alone, but for all time. This unique character of the revelation shows that it is divine. And thus there still "breaks more light from God's holy Word" as the ages move on. Whether or not, then, we see the reason of it, we note the fact that it is not God's method to pour the full flood of His light on the minds and hearts of men all at once. If we could see no farther than that, we might be content, and reverently say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight."

As an instance of this growing illumination, take the fact that in the primitive ages there was no clear revelation of immortality. I have no doubt that men of high spiritual calibre believed it; but the revelation came to them more directly from the movement of the Spirit, than from any intimation in the Word. Yea, when men had no Word at all, I believe there were devout souls who had glimpses, more or less clear, of a future world. But the mass of mankind, even the religious people of mankind, had in most instances no such revelation.

Now if that is true, it becomes less surprising that the most devout souls have had for so long no conception of Restoration. The analogy of revelation shows beyond all doubt that Restoration may be true, though for ages and ages men had no conception of it. Nay, they may have been students of the Word through all those ages, and yet have been blind to its higher revelations. That is no disparagement. There is a time for everything; and there is a time for brighter divine light to break on the minds and hearts of men.

Then it may be supposed that if further divine light were to be given, God would have chosen more worthy mediums for communicating it. But as a rule, it is not through the great and the learned that revelations generally have come; but rather through the humble and comparatively obscure. This is God's way. He may choose what media He will as well as what time He will. We read that "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty." And He did the same thing long ago in giving a written revelation to the world. Some of the writers were noble and learned, while others were illiterate and obscure. So it is no disparagement to this larger view if it does not come to us through what the world calls respectable channels.

Then it may be noted that truth was given to men as they could receive it. To reveal the whole truth in an obscure age would dazzle more than it would enlighten. God knows men's capacity for receiving

truth; and He adapts His communications accordingly. Jesus could say to His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you; but you cannot bear them now." And, by His Spirit He has been saying those "many things" ever since, as men could receive them. It was a great thing for His disciples to have, for instance, such a clear vision of immortality as they certainly had when Christ ascended on high. That was enough along that line for the time; but now there is breaking on our hearts the larger view of Restoration.

Yes, and we might have had that glorious truth much sooner, if we had not grossly lapsed into sin, and so obscured heaven's light. The fact is, that in the early centuries of the Christian era the larger view was accepted freely. But by and by the church of Rome invented the dogma of eternal torment for its own gain; and that is how we came by our evil heritage. So that in this matter we have lapsed from our early faith; and a sad, sad lapse it was, entailing untold mourning, lamentation, and woe.

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But it is a glorious truth that men with the utmost limitation can be used of God for the highest ends. Elsewhere I cite the case of the Apostle Peter in this regard. He could be used for the conversion of three thousand men by means of one sermon; and later the conversion of five thousand men; and yet he did not believe that the Gospel was intended for the Gentiles as well as the Jews. It is a marvel of divine wisdom and grace that such a poor instrument could be used for such a glorious work. And we have seen the same principle at work in our own time. If Restoration is true, yet men who believed in endless torment, and counted it a prime article of the orthodox faith, were, notwithstanding, the very salt of the earth, and were used of God in conserving and disseminating the limited truth which they knew. I say, that is a marvel of divine grace and condescension.

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We see the same principle also in the domain of Science. Let us not forget that all truth—whether spiritual or scientific—is a revelation of God. When we make a discovery in either realm—or perhaps I should say when a revelation is made to us in either realm—like Kepler we are really "thinking God's thoughts after Him." These very thoughts were in God's mind, else they could not be in ours. What we do know is often associated with a vast field of the unknown.

And how slow we are to learn. Just think of a few of the discoveries—or revelations—of late years. And for ages and ages past, men were in total ignorance of these things, though they were close to their hand. Is it not very suggestive of how little we know yet of the truth in the spiritual domain, to be unfolded to us in due time?

I say, just think of a few of the scientific discoveries we have made of late years. I need not stay to note the wonderful developments in surgery and medicine. They may be regarded as commonplace now; but every one of them was a discovery. Think of the discovery of how to use steam, and all that the discovery has led to. Allied with that, think of the immense quantities of coal we burn, and only extract a small percentage of its heat as yet. One of these days there will likely dawn on some mind the correct way of using it, and then what a revelation. Think of the tar evolved in the process of making gas, that lately went to loss, and that is now used in dyeing. Think of the telephone wire, and more lately the telephone without wire. Think of the heat, light and power evolved from electricity. Think of the inventions and discoveries that we read of almost every day. The by-products that are now a source of so much wealth and comfort, were not dreamed of a few years ago. Do we not see here how little we know, even in the domain of Science?

And is it to be supposed that in the spiritual realm there is not much more to learn? Our special affinity is for things material; yet in this domain we are only in our infancy. How much more is it so in things spiritual. Surely it does not become us to balk at a new revelation.

In justice, however, to our backwardness in receiving any new spiritual truth, there are some explanations. I have referred to our special affinity for truth that relates to things physical. We have a corresponding slowness to apprehend spiritual truth. But in addition to this, we have to note that the truth in reference to material things is usually subject to demonstration. We can see the thing actually done. It is an absolute certainty; there is no room for doubt. In regard to spiritual truth it is different. "The kingdom of heaven cometh not with observation." There is no demonstration. The truth is apprehended by faith, sometimes aided by revelation, or reason, or intuition, or spirit revelation. This is where sin has obscured our spiritual vision; and often we are still made more blind by our material employments and pursuits.

It is not surprising then that we are slow to take up a new spiritual idea. And we ought to be slow, lest we imbibe error in the guise of truth. But at the same time we ought to keep an open and receptive mind, believing that there are vast and high domains of truth yet unrevealed.

In this regard how sad it is that some of the brightest lights that ever illuminated the world were clouded all their days by inherited errors. Take Luther as an example. For years and years he was haunted by the dread of eternal reprobation. And so it has been with thousands and thousands more of the devoutest and sincerest souls. Oh, if they had only known that there is no such thing as eternal reprobation!

XIV.

TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.

The Unrevealed—Scripture and Reason—Bishop Butler's Dictum
—Reverence of Kepler—Moral Courage of Sir Oliver Lodge—Increase of
Laxity—The Spirit's Almighty Power—Supreme Authority of Scripture
—The Proper Sphere of Reason—Fate of the Heathen—Singular Reserve
of Preachers—Sin is Abnormal—Union of Divine Power, Wisdom and Love
—Reasonableness and Harmony—A Multitude of Scripture Promises
—Discipline Instead of Eternal Torment—Dr. Funk's View—The Great
Panacea for Unbelief—Ingersoll—No Divine Failure.

Some have a belief that on topics that are unrevealed we ought to be reverently silent. On certain subjects that may be the correct attitude. "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread." But though there are many cases in which we cannot attain to certainty, we may perhaps attain to probability, and a high degree of probability. In many cases that is sufficient; often it amounts to moral certainty. As Bishop Butler says, "Probability is the very guide of life."

With the best use that can be made of Scripture and reason, there are many topics on which we shall not attain to absolute certainty. But if we attain to probability, we have made a great advance. Moreover, the probability of this age may be the certainty of the next.

Besides; it would argue a very unworthy belief in the goodness of God, to refrain from investigating the domain of truth so far as we can, lest unhappily we should have to discount the forces that make for righteousness.

Religion and science should be united in this search for truth. And we are glad to see that some of the foremost exponents of scientific truth have this idea. As Sir Oliver Lodge says, "It is the duty of Science to examine even into the domain of religion." In fact, Science is religion when its discoveries, as in the case of Kepler, are recognized as the thoughts of God. Another scientist has truly said that "the highest science is the highest religion."

I think it is worth while to quote the noble words of Sir Oliver Lodge in this connection. He says: "If we refrain from examination and enquiry for no better reason than the fanciful notion that perhaps we may be trespassing on forbidden ground, such hesitation argues a pitiful lack of faith in the good-will and friendliness and power of the forces that make for righteousness. Let us study all the facts that are open to us with a trusting and open mind, with care and candor, seeking the verification of all our speculative hypotheses, and with slow and cautious progress making good our steps as we proceed. Thus we may hope to reach out further, and ever further, into the unknown, sure that as we grope in the darkness we shall encounter no clammy horror, but shall receive the assistance and sympathy which it is legitimate to symbolize as a clasp from the hand of Christ Himself."

But it may be claimed that it is inopportune to discuss this question of Restoration at the present time. It may be thought that the very statement of it may lead to greater laxity of faith and morals. If there are any legitimate grounds even for doubting the doctrine of eternal torment, will not the lingering doubt of many be confirmed? There are those who doubt or even deny eternal suffering, simply because it is more comfortable to do so, and without once appealing to the authority of Scripture or reason in the matter. If the question is allowed to be one of reasonable debate, will not that attitude be confirmed? Especially when the doctrine of endless suffering has so long been recognized as the orthodox doctrine, will not any apparent going back on that doctrine seem a justification of disbelief in what is really evangelical? And thus might not the very opening of the question be a serious injury to some?

While it is freely admitted that there is a degree of justice in this plea, there are certain

considerations that must not be lost sight of.

There is first, the sacredness and the safety of truth. Whatever is the truth in the case must be discovered if possible, and defended at all hazards. Our Lord's prayer was, "Sanctify them through thy truth," So truth has a sanctifying power. It may be pleasant or unpleasant in the discovery, but is beneficent in the long run. We are not to shrink then from the discovery of it. We are to search for it, as for hidden treasures, whatever prejudices and errors it may overturn. It is of God, and is certain to triumph in the end. And it can issue in no ultimate evil, but in everlasting good, despite all our fears.

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Then in this case, we are contending for a truth which brings unspeakable glory to God. As the matter appears to me, His wisdom, power and love, are exalted above all conception. If there were nothing else, this would be a strong argument for the theory we are trying to defend.

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Further; we see here a most worthy effect of the Saviour's Atonement. He is the "Saviour of the World," not in name only, but in fact. According to the old theory, He was actually the Saviour of but a few of the human race; the rest were committed—and ordained—to everlasting torment. Now He is recognized as the "Saviour of all men," even the worst. Can you conceive of any less result in which He would "see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied?"

Then further; the Spirit's almighty power would be vindicated. The old faith taught that He moves on the hearts of men, but not in every case with the intention or desire to compass their salvation. We believe, on the contrary, that He has the desire and the power to break down all opposition, and to carry captive the most stubborn will, without doing any violence to our freedom. We do not know how this is effected, but we see cases in which it is effected. And we can forecast the day when He will triumph over all opposition. The very prospect of it fills us with wonder, and love, and praise.

And in the meantime, what a funeral pall is lifted from the heart of the world! It is a sad world, and I believe chiefly because the belief in reprobation has so long and so widely prevailed. But when there dawns upon our faith the prospect of the whole human race being yet redeemed, what a world of gladness this world becomes!

When such considerations as these have their due effect upon us, objections to the discussion of this great question will have less weight. We shall rejoice instead, if the larger view carries our inmost and most sacred convictions. Our appeal is to the Scriptures, and to the precious gifts of reason, and of human feeling, no less divinely given.

We accord the supreme authority to Scripture; but there is also an appeal to reason. Even here some find differences of opinion. Some will reason from the nature of sin, and what is its desert. Others will reason from the character of God, and the end of divine government. Others, again, will claim that self interest so warps our judgment in the case, that our finding is almost sure to be partial. Still others will claim that the whole matter is too high for us, and refrain from entering upon it, or else take what they judge to be the plain meaning of Scripture, or fall back on the view that has prevailed.

I reverently think, that reason has a legitimate field here. Of course reason ought to be exercised with great caution on such a subject; and we ought ever to hold ourselves ready to revise our opinions, to be in harmony with the advancing light of Scripture.

THIS DIVINE LIGHT.

In the Scriptures we have a revelation of God's character, so far as we can receive such a revelation. We can also form some ideas of His law, and the potentiality of His wisdom and love. We have besides a revelation of the nature of sin, and can have some idea of what it deserves. Moreover, Christ is "the true Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." When we are illuminated with this divine Light, submit all our opinions to the Word of God, and are raised to an impartial plane of judgment, I reverently think we may and ought to make some intelligent forecast as to the suffering of the next life. In fact we have not the option of remaining entirely without ideas on a subject that so vitally concerns ourselves. We must project our thought at times into the future, and form some ideas, more or less concrete, as to what is in store for the race.

It seems well, therefore, to use reason and revelation conjointly, so far as they will carry us. And while not dogmatic, we ought to remember Bishop Butler's dictum, that if two views are opposed, and one is even a little more probable than the other, we ought to embrace it as though it were clearly demonstrated. Along the same line Mr. Gladstone says:

"The free development of conviction is, upon the whole, the system most in favor both of truth and of charity."

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I am very far, therefore, from jumping at new conclusions, especially on a subject of such tremendous solemnity. But I feel that we should keep our minds and our hearts open, realizing how little we know yet of God, and of His illimitable dispensations. Especially should we hail with thankfulness any gleam of light on the awful darkness that has so long brooded over the destiny of by far the largest portion of mankind.

The eminent Dr. Funk, who is well known to be a profound thinker on such matters, writes me as follows:

"What is called 'Eternal Fire,' or 'Eternal Punishment,' it seems to me, may mean simply, that long continued suffering, both negative and positive, which wilful imperfection brings. It does not seem to me that the time can ever come when the Everlasting Father will abandon His child that He has created. No; it is infinitely less likely that He would do this than an earthly parent. Christ has said that the good shepherd will leave the ninety and nine, and continue to search until he finds the missing lamb."

In marked contrast to such an idea just ponder for a moment some of the doctrines of the Calvinistic theology. To get a realistic idea of the matter, think of God bringing into the world one soul whom He destined for everlasting torment. That is no overstatement. For if there was no Atonement of Christ for that soul, there could be no possible escape for it. That soul was doomed from all eternity to everlasting fire. Yet the advocates of that thought will tell you that the Atonement was sufficient for all, and adapted to all. Moreover, they will tell you at the same time that God is Eternal Wisdom and Love! Could you conceive of a greater contradiction?

It is no wonder that on this topic there has been a singular reserve of late years. It would appear that preachers are undecided as to what stand they ought to take; and so they usually say nothing definite on this momentous question. To a candid mind it must appear a strange thing that the question is so dormant. A more vital question could hardly be conceived. Yet hundreds of books are written, and thousands of sermons are preached, and the question is hardly touched. Will the impenitent have any suffering in the next life; and if so, of what kind, for what purpose, and of what duration?

Almost nothing is advanced on such all-absorbing topics. We hear sometimes of the wrath of God in a very general way, which really has little meaning, so long as no hint is given as to what that wrath consists in. And we hear a great deal about opportunities in life being missed, without any specific intimation of the consequences.

Do men really believe in future punishment at all? If they do, why do they not say so? Surely the subject is no trifling one that can be passed over smoothly. Is it not a matter of the most paramount, eternal interest for a man to know whether he is passing in a few brief years to extinction, or torment, or to a process of reformation? This would seem to be the question of all questions. And yet it is passed over Sabbath after Sabbath almost in silence.

And when we think how any clear cut conviction might affect a man's character and life, we are surprised that conscientious men can treat the matter so coolly. Is it because they are in a state of transition as to which is the correct theory to be proclaimed? In that case, we could understand their hesitation. But surely such uncertainty ought to be acknowledged. But it is not confessed. It is a question if even a discussion of the different theories would not be better. Such a discussion would be likely at all events to keep men awake, and perhaps arouse their concern.

Especially on the relation of this subject to missions, there ought to be some definite statement. At the present time there is a great revival of interest in missions. But there is a marked lack of direct incentive. What are the heathen to be saved from? Is it from endless torment? Certainly that is not believed. If it were, we would move heaven and earth to save even one of them from that fate. Is it then from extinction? Such a claim is never definitely put forward. Then is it from the suffering incident to reformation? No one speaks of that. There is no definite incentive urged to impel men to sustained and eager missionary enterprise.

Hence we fear that missionary enterprise will wane. There is a general idea of saving the heathen; but from what? There is no definite idea; at least none is put forward. I think there ought to be a brotherly conference, composed of men holding diverse views on this subject, that if possible some unanimity might be arrived at—some definite issue that would be fearlessly outspoken, that would be a real and compelling incentive.

It may be said that certainty cannot be arrived at, and that therefore silence is better. That may well be doubted. Certainty in general is not likely to be attained all at once. There will first be a period of inquiry. What saith the Scripture? What saith reason? And what saith our own instinct? Then there will be a period of probability. After that there may come a time of certainty. The fact that unanimity of view may not be attainable at present is no good reason for treating such a momentous topic with silence. I reckon that he does a service to mankind if he contributes anything to the solution of this great question, even if by so doing he stirs up opposition. Surely at this late day we ought to be able to say something definite about men's eternal destiny.

The soul has naturally a strong affinity for truth. Hence there is nothing more demoralizing than any sustained attempt to believe that which does not commend itself to our most sacred convictions. Far better it is to be honest and sincere, even though that may involve temporary error. I believe that to the devout and enquiring soul the truth will be revealed in due time. It is to the upright that there ariseth light in the darkness.

Colonel Ingersoll was not so deficient in honesty and candor as is usually supposed; but, combined with an unfortunate early training, the issue in his case was disastrous. A noted clergyman was on confidential terms with him, and on one occasion Mr. Ingersoll told him the secret of his infidel opinions. He said he was early taught that God elected a few of the human race to eternal glory, and that the vast remainder He decreed to everlasting fire; "and," said Mr. Ingersoll, "I determined to hate Him." "If I believed that," said the clergyman, "I would hate Him too." So, on the day of final account, there may be extenuations that will surprise us.

Let it not be supposed that I have any sympathy with Ingersoll's infidel views. On the contrary, I abhor them. Some years ago I gave a series of Sabbath evening talks on Ingersoll and his opinions; and there was a large attendance of the class of men that I wished to reach. I cannot but think that the travesty of divine truth that has so long prevailed in the guise of orthodoxy, is responsible to a large extent for the practical infidelity that exists in the Christian world to-day.

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It is all very well for men to speak of the final reign of grace; and some are very eloquent along that line, never turning their eyes backward on the uncounted millions of the past who lived and died in heathenism. What has become of them? That is the question; and it calls for an answer that as Milton says, will "justify the ways of God to men."

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There are a number of propositions which I would try here to state with all clearness. We have casually glanced at some of them; but I think it will conduce to clearness if we present them statedly and group them together.

First: "God infallibly accomplishes everything at which he aims."

These are the words of an orthodox divine. I think they will commend themselves to our judgment at once. But the divine in question never thought his dictum would be given such a wide application. The application is this: Surely God "aimed" at making every man immortal; but in that case there could be no extinction. And surely God "aimed" at making every man happy; but in that case there could be no endless torment. On this basis, therefore, both extinction and endless torment are impossible. What remains then but Restoration?

The second proposition is: That sin and suffering are abnormal conditions in God's universe; and that therefore they cannot be everlasting. If this theory is correct it would rule out endless torment.

Then again: It is conceivable that temporary sin and suffering may be necessary factors in God's righteous government.

This theory would explain why sin and suffering are permitted for a time.

Again: Infinite holiness will do away with sin, and infinite love will do away with suffering, as soon as perfect righteousness will permit. Thus we believe that when sin and suffering have served their purpose, they will be eliminated.

Further: There is no sin that infinite holiness, infinite power, infinite love, and infinite wisdom cannot subdue, without impairing the freedom of the offender.

This idea makes it credible that the worst of mankind will be reclaimed.

Finally: The fact that God is love will induce Him to place all His creatures in conditions of happiness

as soon as that can be done in conformity with wisdom and righteousness.

I would ask you to revolve these propositions through your mind very seriously. See if you can find a flaw in any of them; and conceive if you can, of any reasonable theory whereby any of them may be controverted.

I would conclude this part of our subject by citing some passages of Scripture. The references in some cases may have a more limited and restricted meaning; but they all tend in the same direction. There are certain stars which, seen by the naked eye, are single, but when observed through a telescope are seen to be double stars. Being of the same appearance, and lying in the same direction, they are fused into one, though there may a vast space between.

It is so in many passages in the Word of God. They have a double meaning; one nearer, and one more remote. Events are foretold which are realized in part in this life, and fully in the life to come. The fact is, that in many cases we have to take in the future life in order to understand the reference at all. It has been too much our habit not to look for definiteness and accuracy, because we imagined the events must find their fulfillment in the present life. But When our outlook goes beyond this life, we see a reasonableness and harmony that we did not see before.

This will be apparent in some of these passages. And it will help our interpretation very much if we only remember that the whole span Of time is but a passing epoch in the divine administration.

Here then are some passages; and there are many more of similar tenor, which we would do well to ponder.

"In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

I would just enquire: How can such a promise as that be fulfilled within the span of time? *Not* for about two thousand years was the divine seed of Abraham born, when the promise was given. Meantime thousands and thousands of the families of the earth went out of this life in sin and darkness, without having so much as heard the Saviour's name. It is now nearly two thousand years more, and the human race has much increased; millions and millions more of the families of the earth have come and gone; and in their case the promise has not been fulfilled. And be the ardor of missions what it may, uncounted millions more of the families of the earth will never in this life so much as hear of the blessing through Abraham's seed. Is it not inevitable that we must take into our view the possibilities of life to come? The promise will be fulfilled then. "All Israel shall be saved."

I will not stay to make any further comments on the passages I would submit. Let them speak for themselves.

"He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away all tears from off all faces."

"And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away."

"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation."

"I have sworn by myself, the word is gone forth out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear."

"The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

"His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blest in him; all nations shall call him blessed."

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? Saith the Lord God; and not that he should return from his ways and live?"

"For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."

"For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one many shall be made righteous."

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

"And so all Israel shall be saved."

"That was the true Light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world."

"For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

"And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me."

"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of truth."

"Who gave himself a ransom for all to be testified in due time."

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."

"And he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away.

Thus we have quoted some of the words of revelation that are manifestly opposed to the idea of eternal torment.

To be sure, there are Scripture statements that are difficult to explain on this basis; but their import is generally more or less obscure. On the other hand, there are statements so favorable to the idea of Restoration that their meaning can hardly be mistaken. And always remember this,—that this question is not one for absolute demonstration. It is a question, rather, as to which view is more consonant with reason and Scripture. We are not to suspend our judgment until the matter is proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. We do not act so in other matters. If we did, we should have few earnest convictions on any subject. It is sufficient if a certain view is more probable than another. In that case, according to Bishop Butler's dictum, we should believe it as though it were demonstrated. In this particular case, though the question is beset with a great deal of mystery, as we might expect, the theory of discipline is far more agreeable with Scripture and reason than that of everlasting torment.

The great panacea for unbelief is a larger view. We have to take in the future, in order to see the rounding out of God's great plan. 'An edifice may be hideous if seen from the rear, and incomplete. But wait till it is finished, and then view it from some vantage ground in the front, and its noble proportions and beauty are appreciated. So it is with the divine plan. We see but a part of it now, and the lower part. But bye and bye it will be complete. Then—

"Ye good distrest! Ye noble few
Who here unbending stand, beneath
Life's pressure—bear up yet a while,
And what your bounded view deemed evil
Is no more, the storms of wintry time
Will quickly pass, and one unbounded spring
Encircle all."

In the various passages that I have quoted we cannot but discern three great universals that involve each other. To these three universals all Evangelical Churches are tending. They seem to me to include what is really vital to faith and hope. The great universals are these:

Universal Love;
Universal Atonement;
Universal Salvation.

The first is accepted nominally by all; but how the first can be intelligently received, with a supposed limitation of the second, is hard to see. It is admitted that on the part of God there is universal love for all his creatures; it is admitted that this love expressed itself in Atonement. It is further admitted that this Atonement is as suitable for all as it is for a part of the race. Yet for ages it has been claimed that the Atonement is not divinely intended for all. How universal love, united with infinite power and infinite wisdom could act in this way is to me an everlasting mystery. So absurd does this position now appear, that a majority of the churches idea—perhaps unconsciously—with a decision and force not warranted by the original. Therefore I think I am justified in laying no great stress on passages of such doubtful meaning. It seems to me more honest and candid to wait for greater unanimity.

On the other hand, the passages that I have cited in favor of Restoration are in most cases so plain

that they can hardly even be tortured into giving an uncertain sound. Take for instance, the passage in relation to the extent of the Atonement. "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but also for the sins of the whole world." "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." There is no uncertain sound there.

To me it is a marvel how men could accept and defend the doctrine of a limited Atonement, in the face of such clear statements. If such a course was taken in order to uphold a certain system of theology, it ought to be an everlasting warning to theologians not to make their systems of theology too complete. When we come to realize how little we know of God's plans and purposes, we shall see that completeness is entirely beyond us.

Then with such clear statements of a universal Atonement as I have quoted, take that dictum to which I formerly referred, and which I think none will dispute, that "God infallibly accomplishes everything at which he aims." Put the two things together, and what do they amount to? Do they not give us a certainty of Restoration? For if God gave His Son in order to make provision for all mankind, He surely desires the salvation of all mankind; and if God thus "aims" at the salvation of all, will He not accomplish it? If we had no hints whatever as to how that is done, either in this life or the next, we might rest on the assurance; it will infallibly be accomplished.

And then we have such a revelation of the character of God that we could expect no less. He is infinite Wisdom; He is infinite Power; and He is infinite Love. Put those three things together, and what will they not accomplish? Think the matter over for awhile. Can you imagine any consummation less than the final salvation of all?

That divine wisdom, divine power, and divine love can compass nothing better than endless torment, is almost unthinkable. And if such an ultimatum could be thought of as a possibility, then I would humbly ask: Is such a consummation worthy of God? And I would ask also: What would be the practical benefit of it? Would it not be a reflection on love and power that are infinite?

To think that man was made in the divine image, and had within him the potentiality of attaining to absolute perfection and blessedness, but that his career has culminated instead in the character of a demon, and the suffering of endless torment! Is it possible to believe that the divine administration could be such a failure?

This is no exaggeration Men believed, or tried to believe, that for certain persons of the human race there was no possibility of a different fate. They might say it was possible because they did not know who was elected and who was not; and that they did not know for whom Christ died, and for whom He did not die. Therefore, they might argue that all men had a chance. No; they had no chance if the secret divine intention was against them.

Away with all untruth and misrepresentation. How much better, and how much more in keeping with the divine character, and the divine revelation to say, without any halting or doubt, that God loves every man whom He has made; that He has provided for every man's salvation; that if men do not accept the provision they will suffer; but that God will triumph in the end, and that divine love will win. Surely, that would be a Gospel indeed for our poor sin-stricken world!

XV.

TESTIMONY OF REASON.

Divine Gift of Reason—Its Proper Sphere—No Dogmatism—Is Sin an Infinite Evil?—Infinite Penalty Impossible to Be Rendered—Justice Can Delay—Good Cannot Perish—Testimony of Dickens—Endless Punishment Increases Moral Evil—The Divine Character Never Changes—Time But a Short Epoch—Our Capacity of Development—Salvation of Infants—The Insane—Imperfect Christians—Their Destiny—Good Unchristian Men—Where Will They Go?—"All Souls Are Mine"—Worth Preserving—Fate of the Heathen—Reclaimed in the Next Life—Human Freedom Never Destroyed—Provision for All—A Dreadful Hymn—Divine Sacrifice not in Vain—Bringing Good Out of Evil—Final Triumph of

Goodness—Sin Is Abnormal—Will Therefore Cease—Law of Gradual Change—Sins of the Mind—The Race Might Easily Have Been Intercepted—Endless Torment Cannot be Believed—The Mind's Affinity for Truth—True Punishment Is Reformatory—Alleged Divine Cruelty—Agony of Eternal Separation—All Are God's Own Children—The Universal Call—No Design of God Can Fail—Ingersoll and His Shafts of Ridicule—Incentive to Good Works—Unfathomable Divine Love—"Joy Cometh in the Morning."

It may be said that we are dealing here with matters that are entirely too high for our reason. Let it be remembered that we absolutely bow to revelation. Yet we are not to stultify our reason. It is not out of its sphere in dealing with such high themes. Our reason is a sacred gift from God; it is to be used for His glory. Formerly, it was deemed almost sacrilegious to allow reason to intrude into such a sacred domain. That was surely an unworthy mistake. We may and ought to be humble; but we have minds to think as well as hearts to adore.

It may be well, therefore, to present, in as condensed a form as possible, some considerations founded on reason, in support of the idea of Restoration. And, forasmuch as many of these ideas may or may not be familiar to you, I would ask you to ponder each of them separately. They do not all profess to be conclusive, but I think some of them are nearly so; others are strongly suggestive. As I have said, the question is, not which theory is absolutely demonstrated, but which is most in accord with reason and revelation.

I would like to say that I abhor any appearance of being dogmatic; but the mere statement of an argument almost necessarily induces dogmatism in some degree. At any rate, it is well to have a reasonable and candid mind.

I think, then, that what has been advanced will make you seriously reflect. Give the matter time, and thought, and prayer; and I think you will have a larger vision of the truth, and a higher hope for our poor lost race. To be sure, we are but groping in the twilight as yet. Yes; but it is the twilight of the eternal morning!

The Principal of a theological college once said to me, when I asked him if a certain topic was a proper one for discussion: "If you have a reverent mind, you can discuss anything."

A few abstract propositions might first be stated. The orthodox doctrine is, that sin is an infinite evil, and that therefore sin calls for infinite punishment; but that as man is a finite being, he cannot render infinite punishment in degree; therefore he must render it in duration; hence there must be eternal suffering.

To this it may be replied, in addition to what I said before, that if sin is an infinite evil, there could be no aggravation of it; for nothing that is infinite can be increased, but we know that aggravations of it are possible; hence the necessity of eternal punishment does not follow.

Then, if suffering is infinite in duration, would not the mildest form of inconvenience suffice? For infinity has no end. Therefore the sum total of suffering of any degree would be infinite in amount. Hence, there would be no need of torment.

Further, if unforgiven sin entails a penalty of infinite duration, the penalty could never be rendered. For infinite duration has no end. Hence, if the suffering were prolonged through countless aeons, there would still be countless aeons to come; and when these would have run their course, we would only be at the portals of eternity. Therefore, as the supposed penalty involves eternal duration, it is plain that it never could be rendered. Hence, in all justice, no punishment whatever need be exacted, for we are as near to the complete rendering of it now, as we ever can be, if it be of infinite duration. On that showing, divine justice would never be satisfied.

Again: If justice calls for eternal punishment, how is it that justice can delay the punishment? But it does delay. Does not such delay reduce by so much the term of punishment? But somehow justice can wait. Now if justice can wait for an hour, why not for a day, and why not for a year, and why not for a thousand years, and why not for ever? On this principle we fail to see why there need be eternal suffering.

Then there is the idea that nothing that is really good ever perishes. Scientists and moralists generally agree in this. It is a wholesome instinct, which commends itself at once to every wholesome mind. As Dickens says:—"There is nothing innocent or good that dies and is forgotten; let us hold to that faith or none." But how does such an idea comport with that of eternal torment? It is admitted that many men who are not Christians, have yet a great deal of good in them. Is that good to be preserved

or destroyed? No surer way could be taken to extinguish it than to consign such persons to everlasting suffering. Not only would the good in them be speedily extinguished but the evil would be intensified beyond all calculation. And I think such effects are reckoned upon, and expected, by the advocates of eternal torment. What a burlesque that seems to be on the beneficent purpose of God. Far easier is it to believe that a state of education and discipline is ordained, whereby the good that God Himself has created will be conserved and expanded forever.

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In this connection it is well to remember that God is ever the same. His dispensations may change; but He changes never. If He is love, and power, and pity, and wisdom now, He has the same qualities from everlasting to everlasting. Some appear to think that for the present He is exercising forbearance and patience; but that when eternity dawns He will proceed to stern justice and relentless vengeance. No; God is love, power, wisdom, justice, for evermore; and His infinite resources He will ever use for the holiness and happiness of His creatures. If we would keep this fact steadily in view, we would be slow to believe that He has nothing better in reserve than eternal torment for the most incorrigible of mankind.

Along with this let us remember that God's operations are not confined to the brief span of time. These few fleeting years are a very short epoch in eternity. Here we see but the beginning of His plans; in the next life we may see the fruition of them. But we may believe they will unfold along the same lines. What is grace now will be glory then. What is limited now we may well believe will then be universal.

Consider also the wonderful capacity of development with which we have been endowed. We are really made in God's own image, both mentally and morally. In this world of sin and toil and sorrow we almost forget our divine birthright. But when sin and toil and sorrow are done away, what amazing strides we shall make, and to what intellectual and spiritual heights we shall soar. And is it to be supposed that having made us with such capacities, God has no better use for us than to be cast out of His presence eternally, and that we shall become demons? Surely infinite love and power have something better in store.

Did I say power? Yes, power, with infinite love and wisdom behind it. What will this triumvirate of infinities not accomplish? The power of God in the material world gives us a strong suggestion of His power in the moral world. Can we then think of such an utter failure as eternal torment as being the ultimate doom of the creatures that God has made in His own likeness?

Another consideration is this, that there is some way of salvation provided for infants. That is acknowledged now on all hands. Time was, and not so long ago, that it was accounted very orthodox to say that there were infants in hell "not a span long." But it is not so now. It is admitted that by some unknown process all infants are saved. Now if there be a method of saving infants, is it so hard to conceive that there may be a method of saving adults? To be sure, the adults may be great sinners, and so the process may radically differ. But the minds of very young infants are a perfect blank at first, and so every idea that they require to fit them for the better world has to be communicated. So there must be some process of education. It is easy then to conceive of a process of education for adults, combined of course with such discipline as each case may require. It is reasonable to conceive that some will pass through that intermediate stage without any suffering, except such as may come with larger visions of truth. It is equally conceivable that others will endure pains and penalties unspeakable before they yield. But they will yield at length; divine love will conquer.

Let us also think of this, that this idea of Restoration solves the difficulty as to the insane. Where do the insane go after death? So far as we can see, they are not fitted for either world. But when they regain their right mind, and are put through a process of education, and perhaps of discipline, they will be prepared for the world of bliss. In no other way can we imagine a solution of the difficulty.

The same argument applies to most, if not all, Christians. Despite the dogma that they are made perfect at death, it is plain that in the case of many, perhaps of all, perfection is not attained. Imagine a Christian, but one beset with many imperfections. In a moment some accident cuts him off. Are we to imagine that the mere passing through the gates of death works some magic change in his character? Surely not. What then becomes of him? He does not go to hell, for he is a Christian. Yet he is not fit for heaven. What remains, but some preliminary stage of preparation to make him fit?

And so we think it must be with a good man, but one who is not a Christian. There are many such. Yes, there are men who are not Christians, who are really of a far higher type of character than many Christians. Suppose such a man is cut off suddenly. Where does he go? On the principle that what is good never dies, such a man would go to the better world. But he is not fit for it. But some preparatory stage of preparation might make him fit. We can conceive of no other way of eternal wisdom and love

dealing with his case. And there are myriads of such cases.

And we must not forget that every man—be his character what it may—is the object of the Father's love. There is too much of a disposition to believe that Christians only are loved of God, and that all others are indifferent to Him, if not objects of hate. We have to remember that He loves every man, and has made the best provision that is possible for every man. If men believed this thoroughly, they would have less difficulty in believing in a stage of preparation beyond this life, in the case of so many who never had it here.

Then again, God says, "All souls are mine." If He claims them for His own, they must be precious. And is it to be supposed that He has made no eternal provision for them? If He chose to make them immortal, and ordered their lot in this world, as He certainly did, will not eternal wisdom and love make them worth preserving? Yes, He gave His son for them as well as for us, and thus made a highway for them as well as for us, to glory, and honor and immortality.

Yet, although God claims all souls for His own, millions of heathen have passed away in the past, and millions are passing away now, who never heard the Saviour's name. His is the only name whereby men can be saved; but His name is "Wonderful," and those who could not be saved through that name on this side of death may be saved through it on the other side. Death is but the passage of the soul from one world to another. God reigns in both; and His tender mercy is over all His works.

The same principle applies to incorrigible backsliders. There have been men who were most eminent in Christian grace, who lapsed into backsliding of the lowest type, and even denied the Lord that bought them. They showed no sign of being reclaimed in this life. Will they not be reclaimed in the next? There is nothing to hinder, but it may require a long and terribly severe discipline. But we believe divine love will ultimately triumph.

It helps us to understand how the most abandoned may be reclaimed if we remember the case of Saul of Tarsus. It does seem that Christ can overcome the most inveterate opposition without interfering in the least with a man's freedom. We believe this is the prerogative of Deity alone. Our free will is a glorious heritage; but we have to beware of unduly exalting it. God is greater than even man's free will. If Christ in a moment could break down Saul's opposition, and yet leave him a free man, we cannot conceive of any offender too malignant for Him to subdue. But how it is done is a mystery. It seems to be one of those things that are past finding out.

At all events, we can believe that the most incorrigible will be reclaimed when we have the revelation that Jesus died for all mankind. It is said that He gave Himself a "ransom for all." It is declared that He tasted death "for every man." Now if He tasted death for every man, can we believe that He will not somehow and somewhere reclaim every man? If He does not do so in this life, will He not do so in the next.

Again; it is said that "He shall be satisfied." Will anything less satisfy Him than the salvation of all for whom He died? His influence is not limited to this world. All worlds are under His control. There may be good reasons why some are saved in this life, and others in the next. I will glance at this point immediately. Meantime let us remember that His love and power are unchangeable, and that He is Lord in the world beyond, as well as here. What will not such conditions accomplish?

With regard to the suffering entailed by sin, both in this life and in the next, I have the idea of a possible solution. May not all suffering be ordained as a necessary safeguard of innocence to all eternity? I mean this: We have to recognize the possibility of falling; for the angels fell. We must remember that we are not machines, but moral beings. Now may not sin have been permitted, and the suffering in consequence of it, in order to furnish us with a warning against sin to all eternity? And as we are of such diverse mental and moral calibre, may not our suffering be individually of that kind and degree that it will be exactly what we need as a warning against sin, and so safeguard our innocence for ever?

It may be objected that our memory of suffering would lose its vividness with the lapse of eternal years, and so fail of its effect. But I can believe that we would have a vivid remembrance of it for ever, when I think of how vividly I recall events of my early years. Scenes of my school days I can recall more vividly than the scenes of yesterday.

So far as I know, this is a new idea of the mystery of pain. It may be of no value; but I put it forward that those who are thoughtful along such lines may examine it.

There are other considerations which might be adverted to here; but I think what I have advanced is sufficient. The final argument, and the all-comprehensive one, is, the final triumph of good over evil. Sin will be abolished; love will triumph; God will be all in all.

In what has been advanced it will be noticed that there are some repetitions. But generally these are in new connections. If these ideas were mere platitudes they would not bear to be repeated; but many of them are somewhat off the beaten track, and need to be repeated in order to present them in their true reasonableness and force. For I am trying here to set some things in a clearer light for those who have not given much attention to such studies.

PREPARATION FOR HEAVENLY BLESSEDNESS.

That there is a way of salvation beyond the bound of time is strongly suggested by the salvation of infants. We are all agreed about the salvation of infants. Our heart refuses any other belief. In the case, however, of very young infants, they go into the next life destitute of all moral character. Either heaven must be a very large place, including a place for infants—or else they must undergo some preparatory process before entering. In either case their entire preparation for heavenly blessedness is achieved beyond this life. Now the fact of them being so prepared opens to our faith the possibility of adults being prepared also. The process may differ; we know nothing of details; but it is effective, and in certain cases may be entirely destitute of pain.

With the heathen the same argument holds. He would be a bold man who would say that no heathen is saved. We know that some of them rose to a high moral plane; indeed such as would largely, if not entirely, fit them for the inheritance of the saints. But they had not knowledge of the Saviour. That was all they needed. You will say, perhaps, that that was everything. It was; but it could be supplied very quickly once they crossed the boundary of time. They would meet angel friends there who would soon give them the required information. We can conceive, from what we know of them when here, that they would believe at once, and very soon be fit for at least the beginning of eternal joy.

There have been those who by the light of nature, or by the illumination of the divine Spirit, attained to marvellous perfection; yet, never heard the Saviour's name. Just now I notice that an orthodox divine names Socrates as a case in point. In cases not so marked we can believe that disclosures of truth that they could not learn here, may transform them into saints.

Surely this is a sane, as well as a brighter prospect than was entertained not so very long ago. I recall those lines of the Hymn by Dr. Watts, which I learned when quite young:

"There is a dreadful hell
Of everlasting pains;
Where sinners must with devils dwell,
In darkness, fire, and chains."

Happily the sentiment of the Hymn did not make much impression on me. It is a great boon to children that sometimes they are not very thoughtful.

I wonder if Robert Browning ever learned such Hymns when a child. If he did, he must later have had a revival of more hopeful ideas. He could write that couplet that has been so often repeated:

"God's in His heaven;
All's right with the world."

But all is not right with the world if millions and millions of our fellow creatures are in endless torment, and other millions on their way. I fear Browning's words are often repeated with a glib optimism. All is right with the world, or all will be right, when the whole race is redeemed from suffering and sin; not otherwise. But the love and power of God are equal to the task.

THE SWEEP OF THE INFINITE MIND.

I have sometimes on a sweet and hallowed night watched the moon riding so peacefully through the white clouds; and it did seem to me that if there is suffering anywhere, God has a time and a plan for relieving it. I could not think of Him as being happy otherwise. But if in the sweep of the infinite Mind he descries, even in some far off age, the entire passing away of sin and suffering, I can imagine Him as being perfectly happy. All events being equally present to Him, anticipation may be very much the same as reality.

It has just struck me that the multiplicity of the considerations here advanced may lead to some degree of confusion. I will therefore repeat some of them, and glance at others, condensing them into as few words as possible. I think the effect will be that the total argument will be presented with more clearness and force.

We read that Christ "gave Himself a ransom for all." To my mind that settles the extent of the Atonement. Words could not be plainer. But if Christ gave Himself a ransom for all, will He be satisfied with saving only some? Surely He will see that the ransom which He paid will have its due effect. That means that somehow, sometime, all will be saved. Else in regard to those who are not saved, He died in vain; which is unthinkable.

But He will be satisfied. Yes. He will be satisfied. It is so predicted. Can He be satisfied with less than the salvation of every human soul? We have seen that He died for all. Can He be satisfied with less than the redemption of all? If that is not effected now, will it not be effected later? His administration is from everlasting to everlasting.

It is said again that "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." The scope of His Atonement is universal. Evidently it fails of its full effect now. There are millions who have not even heard the Saviour's name; but they are included in the great plan of propitiation, and it cannot fail.

Then it is written that He "tasted death for every man." This puts the matter beyond all peradventure. His Atonement was not only for the whole world, but for every man. He had every individual singly in His view in making His Atonement; and will it fail of its effect? Surely "His purpose will stand, and He will do all his pleasure."

We read again that "all Israel shall be saved." The words must not be minimized or explained away. Certainly Israel is not saved now. Think of the sins into which they fell in the past; think of all the crises in their history when God was ready to cast them off; think of their condition to-day,—a byword and a hissing among the nations. If the scene is thus to be closed, it seems a mistake ever to have chosen them as a people at all. But it was no mistake. Their time will come; if not in this life, then in the life beyond. They will be saved; the promise will stand.

Again: Christ has promised that if he is lifted up on the cross He will draw all men to Himself. If that promise is limited to this life it is not true. Christ has not drawn more than a moiety of mankind to Himself. But it is gloriously true if we take in the future. He is not limited to one epoch of time. A thousand years are with Him but as one day.

Then think of the sacrifice which the Father made. He gave His Son. Who will fathom the meaning of that sacrifice? Some there are who say that God cannot suffer. On the contrary. I believe that His suffering in giving His Son no man nor angel can fathom. And is it to be thought that God made that sacrifice for less than every human soul? The fact that He loved every soul that He has made, should settle the question.

Then we are often told that the Atonement is suited for all, though it is not intended for all. When we admit that God loves every soul, and that the Atonement is suited for all, are we not shut up to the conclusion that it is, or will be, applied to all? Nothing could hinder, except man's own obstinacy, and we have seen that his obstinacy can be overcome without interfering with his freedom.

We believe that sin will finally be put down. To that effect there are many scriptural declarations. But it is conceivable that it is tolerated for a time as an object lesson, and as a safeguard against evil. Some such beneficent design God certainly has in view; else all His benevolent purposes would take effect in this life. We have to remember that His administration is from everlasting to everlasting. We have also to remember that God has all moral as well as all physical power, even to taking captive the most wicked of men.

When we think of the divine union of love, wisdom and power in God, it is not hard to believe that they will finally triumph. If God in His divine wisdom knows how to act, and divine power enables Him to act, and divine love impels Him to act, it is reasonable to forecast the ultimate holiness and happiness of all intelligences.

We are accustomed to say, and we often see it, that God brings good out of evil. The ultimate abolition of all sin, and the universal triumph of goodness, are but an expansion of the same principle.

We have also to remember that sin in any form is an abnormal condition of the universe. It is not reasonable to think that abnormal conditions will prevail for ever.

There are some who believe that God is so unchangeable that He must necessarily be happy under all conditions. Such are not the representations of Scripture; and though they are but representations, we believe they are agreeable with the fact. Besides; that is not true of our selves; and we know that we are created in the divine image. Now if sin is a disturbing factor of divine happiness, it is reasonable to think that it will finally be done away.

There is no constituent of character that brings so much happiness as love. As God really is love, He is the infinitely happy one. It is therefore reasonable to suppose that divine love will ultimately have its happiest expression; and that will involve the abolition of all sin.

Wrath is no constituent of the divine character; but a potentiality only. If God is to be supremely happy there will finally be no sin to call forth his wrath, for wrath is a disturber of happiness.

So long as God is just, He must punish sin. But punishment is His strange work; it does not directly minister to happiness; therefore it is reasonable to think that sin that calls for punishment will be done away. Besides; Christ bore the penalty of all sin; infinite justice demands no more, any further infliction of suffering is intended only for discipline.

When the angels came to earth on the occasion of the Saviour's birth, they said that they brought good tidings of great joy to all people. But millions and millions of people passed away from earth without hearing the good tidings. Then they must hear the good tidings in the life beyond. But if they are consigned to eternal torment, there are no good tidings for them. And if they are extinct they can hear no tidings, either good or bad. What remains but that the good tidings that did not reach them here will be conveyed to them there? It is likely that the angels knew the scope of their message, and that the conveyance of that message to those on the other side of time, was no more difficult or abnormal than to us on this side.

Then, what about those whom we have known whose spiritual condition was doubtful when they passed away? Is it not extremely likely that God has some way of developing what is good in them, and casting out what is evil? We feel that just at present they would be out of place in either world. Is it not reasonable to think of some intermediate stage of preparation?

Besides; from what we know of the divine method of procedure, it does not seem likely that He would thrust a frail human spirit into the blinding glory of heaven all at once. We are used to gradual changes; they suit us better. An infant newly born is not conscious at first that any radical change in its life has occurred; but it accommodates itself easily and naturally to its new life. And so it would seem uncongenial to us to be thrust at once into the excellent glory. A stage of preparation—be it long or short—would seem to be desirable and necessary. And if it is desirable and necessary, it is provided.

Then there are sins of the mind which are not cast off with the flesh. The sins may be forgiven, but the evil inclinations cling to us. We need a certain time and a certain process to have them eliminated.

We can easily conceive too—in fact we meet with cases of the kind quite often—where a man that is not a Christian has a soul of goodness that makes him really the superior of many so-called Christians. But he is not a Christian. He dies suddenly; and where does he go? The idea of Restoration settles all difficulty. The good that is in him is developed; ultimately he is fit for the inheritance of the saints. In no other way can we think of a wise and gracious disposal of him.

In connection with this idea we cannot but note that even dying saints are by no means perfect in general. There are many cases in which the last sickness seems to bring no marked change. Yet we have the assured hope that all is well. But if we look at the matter critically, we see no evidence of a state of perfection being reached. There seems to be a need of a refining process on the other side of death; and if it is needed it is provided.

There is a recognized principle, too, that whatsoever is really good will not perish. This is true, both in the domain of physics and of morals. If therefore there is even the beginning of goodness in any soul, it is but reasonable to assume that such goodness will persist, and be completed either on this side of death or on the other side. Such an idea seems to be highly compatible with a beneficent, divine government.

If it be asked why such a process is not carried out always on this side of time, I say we must be cautious about irreverently intruding into divine methods. We might as well ask why Saul, for instance, was not converted earlier. We can but say, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

We have to remember that the present is only one domain of God's administration. The whole span of time which is to us so vast, is but a passing epoch to Him. If we would keep this in mind, it would solve many supposed difficulties.

I think it will be freely granted that no design of God can ultimately fail. But if we follow up that principle, there is no eternal torment; for it will hardly be contended that God designed it. And so with final extinction. It would be a reflection on the divine intention to suppose that he called into being such myriads of the human race, and so wonderfully endowed them, merely to extinguish them at last. This principle, if duly studied, will be seen, I think, to eliminate all possibility both of extinction and of endless torment.

When we consider how both extinction and torment might have been avoided, we are forced to believe that neither alternative was in God's plan. When sin was introduced by our first parents, He might at once have cut them off, or rendered them childless. In either case the myriads of the human race would not have appeared, and thus any alternative of torment or extinction would have been avoided. This consideration, it seems to me, goes a long way to settle the whole question.

Another thing is, that endless torment cannot really be believed. Men may say they believe it; they may think they believe it; it may seem orthodox to believe it; but they really do not believe it. To think that a soul is tormented for ever and ever and ever, is really beyond belief. It is well it is so. Otherwise man would be insane.

When we consider that the soul has a strong affinity for truth, and when we consider that endless torment cannot be believed, there is a strong presumption that it is not true. Any sustained attempt to believe that which the mind instinctively repudiates as false, is in the highest degree demoralizing. There is a strong presumption therefore that the theory of endless torment is not true.

Let it also be noted how hardening was the process of believing the old doctrine. So far did they go who professed it, that some of them gloated over the prospect of souls in torment. Such hardening of the heart raises a strong presumption that the doctrine is false.

Our highest idea of punishment is, that it is reformatory. But in endless torment there is no possibility, and no design, of reformation. A God of infinite love would surely use the highest method, with the highest intention. If suffering was of a limited duration and conducted to our final perfection, we could understand it, and adore the Author of it. But who can see any beneficent design in everlasting torment?

If strict justice demands punishment of eternal duration, we would ask why the punishment is not as a matter of necessity inflicted at once. But we see that justice does not demand its prompt infliction. God can wait long years before inflicting it. But if He can wait ten years, why not a hundred? And if a hundred, why not forever?

Along the same line, we would say that an infinite penalty can never be rendered. For infinitude has no end; and so, no matter how long the penalty might be drawn out, there would still be an eternity to come. So we would never come to the end of eternity; and the penalty could never be rendered. This seems to me a strong argument against everlasting punishment.

In the same connection I would venture the idea that sin is not an infinite evil, and does not call for an infinite punishment. I do not think that a finite creature like man can commit an infinite crime. The fact that an infinite punishment cannot be rendered, seems to show that the crime is not infinite. If not, then in justice there is no everlasting punishment.

Coming back to matters more strictly within our grasp, I would ask what has been so often asked: What will become of the heathen? Many of them never had a chance to be much better than they are. Restoration, so far as I can see, is the only settlement of the difficulty. But that settles it completely. In the next world they will learn the way of eternal life which they could not learn here, and ultimately they will rise to eternal blessedness. If there were nothing else, the settlement of that transcendent problem would be a strong endorsement of Restoration.

Then there were heathens who in this life rose very high in knowledge and character. On the principle that whatever is good is immortal, what they gained here will be supplemented, until they are fit for the inheritance of the saints. "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

The idea of Restoration also explains the apparent cruelty of the God of the Old Testament. Sinners were often cut off; and that was a salutary lesson for others; but those who were cut off, were transferred to scenes where they would have better surroundings, and where they would in time rise to a higher moral plane.

The same theory accounts for the salvation of infants. We all believe in the salvation of infants. The heart refuses any other belief. But it is largely a matter of sentiment, apart from the idea of Restoration. They have no character whatever to begin with. But Restoration supplies—we know not how and do not need to know—all they require. The mere fact that infants require some place and process of development beyond this life, is a strong argument for such aid being rendered to others as well.

Also, take the case of suicides. There are many who in a frenzy of despair commit the crime of self-destruction. It is easy to believe that there is sympathy and helpfulness for them on the other shore.

And so with lunatics. Apart from Restoration it is difficult to think what will become of them. They are

not responsible, and it would be unfair to treat them as criminals. On the other hand, they have no ideas nor character such as would fit them for a better world. But they will regain their intellect at the point they lost it; and it is not hard to conceive of their swift upward trend.

There is one very serious difficulty which we can conceive of no way of solving, except on the supposition of Restoration. I refer to the agony which a person must suffer even in heaven on finding that loved friends or relatives are not there. To know that they are in extinction, that they are fit for nothing better, and that hence they are shut out from eternal joy, would surely be an everlasting pang. And the case is infinitely worse if it is realized that they are in endless torment. We think the very thought of that would be unendurable even in a better world.

But how gladsome is the prospect of neither of these fates being in store for them. If it is known that they are in a state of discipline for a time, to emerge by and by into scenes of bliss, we can fancy that such knowledge would be a source of joy unspeakable. And who can imagine the rapture of meeting with such friends later on? This view of Restoration solves the difficulty so often felt in regard to dear ones who died in a state of alienation from God. The everlasting hope that is thus opened up for them is a source of perennial joy.

Here I would make a statement which at the first glance may seem to some rather startling. It is this: There is not punishment for sin, either in this life, or in the next. Christ has settled all that by offering Himself as the sin-bearer for all mankind. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He hath made Him to be sin for us." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." "God gave His Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." If the condition of believing on Him seems to limit the everlasting love of that statement, take the next; "God sent not His Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Yes, the world. There is no limitation there. That means the modern heathen world, and the ancient heathen world, and all grades of humanity of all time. Christ has suffered for them every one. There may be suffering, but there can be no just punishment for sin, either in this life or the next.

But then, there is the necessity for purification. And suffering is made by divine grace to serve that end. We can well conceive then that there are all grades of suffering, and all grades of the duration of suffering, in the next life. It is no contradiction of this idea, but rather a confirmation of it, that very much of this suffering is the result of former sin. Indeed, when we see, even in this life, how often that suffering is a result of sin, yet is a means of purification, we can well believe that it will so operate in the next life, and on a larger scale.

Sinners of every grade require just two things; Forgiveness and Holiness. That is, a title to heaven, and a fitness for it. Let us see how these two things are acquired, and if either of them demands eternal punishment.

Justification is acquired by the death of Christ, and by that alone. "He died for our sins," "He was wounded for our transgressions." "The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "We are justified freely by his blood." That is the one reason and ground for forgiveness. So then, whether men know it or not, they are forgiven. It is the merit of Christ that counts, and that alone. Christ has paid the penalty, and it takes due effect in the forgiveness of every sinner. He "tasted death for every man." Therefore, there can be no just punishment even in the case of the most incorrigible; far less can there be eternal punishment.

But then, as I have said, the sinner needs holiness. Suffering seems to be absolutely necessary here. But in this case suffering is not punishment; for punishment implies wrong doing. But all wrong doing has been atoned for, as we have seen. Hence the suffering that is inflicted is not punishment; it is discipline; the Fatherly infliction of love. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth."

And what is the divine intention of this chastisement or discipline? Is it not the production of a worthy character? In this case it is no less than the re-creation of a character. In producing such a character God uses various means, and one of these, as we have seen, is discipline. But if suffering were continued through all eternity, it would surely not be discipline. We think it would have the very opposite effect, and would produce the maximum of evil. Therefore, on the ground of needed discipline, as well as on that of forgiveness, we can see no necessity for eternal torment. And if there is no necessity for it, certainly it is not inflicted.

It may be well to make this matter a little clearer, even at the risk of some repetition. If there is any doubt about sin being actually forgiven before the exercise of faith or penitence, I would ask: What is the actual ground of forgiveness? Is it not the Atonement of Christ? Necessary as faith and penitence are, could either or both procure forgiveness? If they could, Christ need not have died. But of all things, that was the prime necessity. Without shedding of blood there could be no remission. The corollary of that is, that with shedding blood there can be instant and universal remission.

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Instant, we say? Yes; for "we are reconciled to God by the death of His Son," He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," so God is reconciled now; and not only that, but from all eternity.

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And universal? Yes; for he "tasted death for every man." So every sinner is forgiven by virtue of Christ's Atonement. The benefit of that Atonement extends to the worst man of our race.

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But are not faith and penitence necessary? Yes, they are necessary to final salvation; but if they are necessary to forgiveness, then there was no necessity for Atonement. It is Atonement alone which procures pardon; and as Atonement was for the whole race, so forgiveness is for the whole race also.

To be sure it is written that "we are justified by faith," But surely, we are not to understand those words literally or rigidly. For could faith of itself really justify us? Could it really pay the debt we owe? It is "the gift of God." Is it not therefore wholly without merit? Is not its function, rather, to bring us into the consciousness of justification? I do not see how it could do more than that.

But if we want to know the ground of justification, must we not look for it in the death of Christ? It is written that we are "freely justified by his blood." Is not that really the ground? And inasmuch as Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," the merit of his death goes back to the first, as well as extends to the last, sinner of our race. When the matter is viewed in this light, does it not seem a moral necessity that all sin is already forgiven?

But it may be pleaded that God is "angry with sinners every day;" that "tribulation and wrath" are ordained for "every soul of man that doeth evil;" and so on. How, then, can divine anger, tribulation, and wrath rest upon a person that is forgiven?

Simply because God's very nature is opposed to sin in every form; and he must visit sin with wrath and tribulation, though it be forgiven. In fact, it is because sin is forgiven, and that thus the basis of salvation is laid, that God is so painstaking to make the most and the best of us.

It is, therefore, easy to believe that wrath and tribulation will be continued in the next life until the sinner repents, and turns to God. The fact that Christ has died for him will be no mitigation of necessary discipline, any more than it is now. The very fact that in this life we see the same principle of suffering on the part of God's own children, is proof enough of the righteousness and wisdom of a similar course being followed in the next life. The merit of Christ's Atonement does not avail for shielding sinners from necessary suffering in either life.

But did not Christ at times pronounce forgiveness in such a way as to mean that it occurred just then, and not before? Take that case of the paralytic to whom he said, "Thy sins are forgiven." Does it not look as if the man were forgiven then and there? And yet, how could it be? The man as yet had not been healed, and so there was nothing to indicate his saving faith in Christ. Yet the Saviour pronounced his forgiveness. It seems to me that Christ was rather bearing testimony to the fact that the man had been forgiven—he did not say when. It may have been that the poor paralytic was laboring under the fallacy that his suffering was owing to special sin, and so Christ wished to give him the joy of conscious pardon.

Or, take the case of the poor penitent in the house of Simon. Jesus said to her, "Thy sins are forgiven," and to "go in peace." Now were her sins forgiven the moment Jesus spoke to her? Were they not forgiven prior to that? Was there anything in the woman's mental or moral attitude to Christ to indicate that not till the moment that he spoke the word were her sins forgiven? The fact is, that he spoke the word when circumstances led up to it, and not before. There is nothing to forbid the idea, it seems to me that her sins were always forgiven; but Jesus spoke the word of comfort just when it was needed. She had now the joy of conscious forgiveness; I think that was what Jesus intended to bestow.

So it seems to me that all sin is forgiven already. The death of Christ secures that boon. And is there anything which would break a sinner's heart so effectually as to know that, let him sink in wickedness to the lowest possible depths, yet that all his sin is already forgiven? If anything would win him, can you conceive of anything so effectual as that? What a display that would be of the conquering power of love divine!

Here I would note a singular coincidence. The very day after I had written that there is no punishment for sin either in this life or the next—that it is all discipline—I received a book from some unknown friend in which the same idea occurs. Speaking of a prodigal daughter, the author says:

"There was but one thing wanting to restore her to her home—a mere act of the will that should have prompted her to say, 'I will arise, and go to my father!' It is precisely so with every child of God. There is no moment in which they are not forgiven, and the Father anxiously longing for their return." In another place he says, "All sin is forgiven sin."

But, mark you; this author writes from the standpoint of orthodoxy. Then if "all sin is forgiven sin," how can it merit eternal punishment? How can future suffering be considered punishment at all if all sin is forgiven?

And this author is very sure that the suffering is absolutely endless. This is what he says: "If in the infinite love of God there might be found a shortening of the sinner's doom, it would certainly be a matter of relief to all; but the only Book that comes with answer to the great questions of the soul, it seems to me, lends no encouragement to such a hope."

Evidently, this man's heart is better than his head. He says that God has ordained everlasting suffering; but our author is not satisfied with that; he would be glad if some "shortening" of the sinner's doom could be found, but he cannot find it. He does not seem to realize that in these words he claims to be more merciful than God Himself.

Now, if "all sin is forgiven sin," as the author says, and as I believe it is, then how can there in justice be everlasting suffering? The suffering cannot in justice be punishment, since the sin is forgiven; nor can it be discipline if the suffering has no end, for no moral improvement would be attained thereby, but the very maximum of evil. Surely, a merciful and just and wise God cannot be the Author of any such scheme? Would it not be a thousand times more reasonable to conceive of suffering as being temporary; to be inflicted as a necessary discipline; and then when the discipline is attained, to cease?

The reverent and reasonable way of looking at the entire matter seems to be something like this: First; all sin is forgiven in virtue of the Atonement that has been made. The benefit of that Atonement extends to the first man of our race, as well as to the last one. The benefit of it extends to the whole family of man, whether heathen or not; and whether small sinners or great.

Further; every man is a sinner in some degree, and he needs a degree of discipline which the present life does not provide, but which is provided in the next. This will be as varied as men's character and attainments. In those who have risen high, it may well be described as a passage into glory, for it will, indeed, be realized as such. But it will be a lower glory, preparatory for a higher, to be attained later on. Others, with different degrees of evil still clinging to them, will have to undergo pains and penalties suitable to their condition, and so by gradual ascent attain to perfection and blessedness. Thus, it is reasonable to think that there will be as great a variety of character and capacity then as now; and this will largely determine the great variety of place, service, and so on.

But supposing that future punishment did issue in moral improvement, and that such improvement should go on increasing, is it thinkable that under an infinitely gracious and wise government there would come no time of such perfection as would warrant release? But in that case the suffering would not be endless. Whichever way you take it, that seems to be the inevitable, final issue.

So it seems to me that the only wise, and beneficent, and just idea of future suffering, whether it be intense or mild, or whether it be of shorter or longer duration, is, that it will be the means of working out a divinely intended degree of moral perfection; and that it will then come to an end. This course of procedure we observe here and now. It may operate on a larger scale, and with more final results, in the life to come; but we apprehend that the principle will be much the same. And the principle is enough for us now. The details, we are sure, will be worthy of Infinite Wisdom and Love.

It will thus be observed that our author's dictum that "all sin is forgiven sin" absolutely forbids the idea of endless torment. It is a marvel that he did not see this before. But somehow, likely from early training, there is a strong disposition to retain the idea of endless torment as though it were the Gospel. We think, on the contrary, that any good reasons, whether founded on Scripture or on common sense, should be hailed as a deliverance from intellectual and spiritual bondage. Above all things, let us beware of turning the divine light into darkness.

This is a mere sketch of the order that may be supposed to obtain in the next life. We need to put Scripture and reason together to get a view of such things as will commend themselves to our best judgment. And when we have done our best, what can we really know of details? Not much, certainly; but enough to appeal strongly to faith and hope. In fact, anything like a complete revelation could not be given to us now and here; for we have not the capacity nor the experience to understand it. And even if it could be given, it might largely distract us from the ordinary duties of life. It is a gracious Providence that shuts out the unseen from these mortal eyes. But we have the great consolation that "what we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

In regard to the unfolding of divine truth, I have just met with the following terse expression of it: "The inscrutable laws of the all-wise God do not reveal themselves in one generation, but ripen with the desire for knowledge on the part of mankind."

Thus, there is a progress in revelation. There are epochs when men get larger views of truth. I think the present is one of these epochs. Many statements of Scripture that were supposed formerly to relate wholly to the present life, are now seen to relate to the life beyond. This brings a wonderful naturalness and harmony into the whole scheme of grace, so far as it is revealed.

The idea of no endless torment is but an enlargement of the principle that God brings good out of evil.

Consider also that an ideal condition of the universe seems to require that sin and suffering will be forever eliminated; and that under God's administration an ideal condition will be realized.

Further; God has a personal love for every human soul. The most degraded of our race can say as truly as did Paul, "He loved me." It is reasonable to expect, then, that infinite Love will secure for the worst of mankind something better than endless torment.

I have referred to the fact that the mind has a strong affinity for truth. But certainly, it has a strong repugnance to a belief in endless torment. Men try to believe it because they think it is taught in the Bible, and that it would be a dangerous thing to doubt it. But apart from that, there is no natural or hearty concurrence of the mind in that view. And I think I may say that such an attitude is more pronounced in those of an elevated and reverent turn of mind.

Then we know that God "does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Therefore we believe all the suffering of this life and of the next is but as a means to an end.

The fact, also, that sin and suffering are abnormal features of the divine administration, indicates almost beyond doubt that they will finally be done away.

Remember, too, that it is very clearly revealed that an Atonement has been made for "every man." Thus, a divine provision has been made for every man. Now the provision involves desire; and can the desire fail? Under a perfect administration, therefore, how can there be endless suffering?

Then if God gave His own Son, and if the Son gave Himself, for the redemption of the world, will that Atonement fail of its effect in a single case? Such a possibility is almost unthinkable.

Consider, also, that the possibility of eternal sin and suffering seems to imply a failure of the divine administration; which is impossible.

Then, God is forever the same. If He is love, wisdom, power, justice, mercy, now, He is the same through all eternity. At no future epoch, therefore, can we conceive of the necessity of endless torment.

We have to remember too, that God rules in all worlds, and throughout all time. Forever, and everywhere, "His counsel will stand, and He will do all His pleasure."

It is an orthodox doctrine that God cannot suffer. But that does not seem in harmony with the breathing of His sigh, "O that they were wise!" or "How can I give thee up?" or the tears of Christ over the apostate city. Now, if God is eternal Love, do not sin and suffering interfere forever with His happiness? But normally we conceive of Him as the infinitely happy One; therefore that normal condition requires that sin and suffering be ultimately done away.

Then we have the fact that we are God's children; yes, even the most debased of mankind. Paul could say to the idolaters of Athens, "We are His offspring." Now, if we are really His children, and therefore infinitely dearer to Him than our children are to us, will not the present suffering of even one of us be a source of pain to the eternal Father? On that ground we cannot think of suffering as being endless. This is holy ground; let us tread it reverently.

Further; we read that Christ "lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Now, if He loves every man, and atones for every man, and enlightens every man, is it conceivable that He will not somewhere and at some time save every man?

Likewise, we read that "the Spirit is given to every man." Is not that the initial stage of redemption? Then will not redemption be completed? Here we see but a very small part of the outgoings of Him who is from everlasting to everlasting.

Then this larger view explains God's universal call. He says, "Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth." There we see God's intention; and if it is not carried out in this life, will it not be in

the life to come? We are accustomed in our short-sightedness to think that the dividing line of death is final. But with God it is not final. It only marks the stage from one epoch to another.

In the same way, this larger view explains God's repeated promise to Abraham. The promise was made to him that in him all the families on the earth would be blest. But uncounted millions of them have not been blest, so far as this life is concerned. Will the promise not be fulfilled? And how can it be fulfilled but by being fulfilled in the next life?

Then, of Christ it was foretold that he should "see of the travail of His soul, and should be satisfied." But surely, He is not satisfied with the comparatively small number of the human race that have been saved. If He loves each one of them individually, will He be satisfied with less than the salvation of each one?

Evidently, He looked forward to this all-conquering epoch when He said that He would draw all men unto Himself. Certainly, He did not draw all men to Himself when He was here. What remains for us but to enlarge our view, and believe that He will do it there?

Along the same line we have the promise that "all Israel shall be saved." That promise has not been fulfilled, and never can be fulfilled, in this life. Is it too much to say that it will be fulfilled in the life to come?

In like manner it is promised that "He shall have the heathen for his inheritance." But uncounted millions of the heathen have died in utter darkness; and millions more are dying now. How can the promise be fulfilled within the bourne of time? But we thank God that the whole span of time is but one short epoch with Him whose ways are from everlasting.

Judging from the revelations that we have of God, we believe that He can and will achieve the maximum of holiness and happiness for all His creatures, according to their several capacities. In harmony with this view, scientists and moralists say that it is a law of the universe that anything that is really good will endure. It is likely that in the future life we shall see the working of that principle as we cannot see it now.

It is strongly in favor of this idea that man is endowed with such amazing potentiality. There seems to be no end to his capacity of development. Now, is it to be supposed that an all-wise God would endow man with such possibilities, and create no scope for their development? Certainly, there would be no worthy development of them in the case of endless torment. This idea strongly suggests universal salvation.

In the case of eternal suffering, without hope of release, would not that condition develop every possibility of evil to all eternity? And would not such an outcome be entirely contrary to the purpose of the Holy One?

Then it is an everlasting argument for universal salvation that such a consummation would be far more glorifying to God, than any other alternative that we can conceive.

Thus, the larger view goes a long way to explain God's delay in saving the heathen. We may fail in giving them the Gospel; but will He fail? Is His success made dependent on any passing whim or indifference of ours? Surely not. He may have good reasons for saving some in this life, and others in the next. We see but a short way into the whole scheme of things.

This larger view also solves the difficulty of dealing after death with the imperfect Christian. He is not fit for the world of bliss, nor yet for the world of woe. But the discipline we are supposing fits him for his higher destiny.

And so, we may well suppose, it will be with the non-Christian good man. On the principle that what is good will endure, all that is good in him will be retained, and the evil will be eliminated.

Also, on this basis we can reasonably forecast the destiny of the insane. Since they lost their reason they are not responsible. But they will resume their reason at the point where it deserted them, and they will be prepared for the inheritance of the saints.

The same theory justifies the destruction of wicked nations. They had gone down to such depths of sin, that it was better for them to be cut off, and to have a new opportunity under more favorable conditions.

This larger view also explains why God chose to continue the human race after they sinned, and entailed on all their posterity such mourning, lamentation and woe. God did an infinitely better thing for the race than extinction. He provided a way of salvation for all. So the day may come in the endless

years when all the pains and penalties of earth will be reckoned trifles as light as air, contrasted with the supernal glory that has been attained.

I would also say that according to this larger view there is no more difficulty as to supposed eternal separations. It has always been a mystery how the good can be happy when conscious that those whom they loved are in everlasting torment. Some have even tried to believe that they would rise to God's own point of view, and survey with complacency the utmost torments of the damned!

When I was a child I often heard the dictum from the pulpit that "the nature that sinned must suffer." Therefore, it was said that our Lord took our humanity in order that He might suffer in our nature. I have believed since that if He had suffered in any other nature, His suffering would be no less efficacious. I believe that the merit of His suffering could be transferred to any other world that needs it, be the inhabitants human or otherwise, and be their sin what it may. I think it is not for us to limit that merit to our own race. But we need not follow that point farther now.

I often heard another dictum, and one of more importance, that I feel inclined to question. It was said that sin committed against God is an infinite evil, because God is infinitely holy. Therefore, it was argued, that sin deserves infinite punishment; but that as finite beings we cannot render an infinite penalty in point of quality, we must render it in point of duration; hence the justice of everlasting punishment.

I confess that to me all this show of logic items act much more than a play upon words. For one thing, it may be doubted if a finite being is capable of committing an infinite sin. If he is not, the whole argument collapses.

Then if he is capable of it, and if the sin in justice demands an infinite punishment, how can a just God forbear inflicting the punishment at once? But He waits to be gracious. Is not that a transgression of the strict law of justice? But if in justice He can wait an hour, why not a year? And if a year, why not a hundred years? And if a hundred years, why not forever? Thus the penalty would be avoided altogether.

Further; if sin demands an infinite penalty, the penalty could never be rendered. For infinity has no end; and so, prolong the penalty as we might through uncounted aeons, there would still be an eternity to come. Therefore, the penalty would never be exacted. It requires the whole of eternity; and eternity will never end. Therefore, on this showing, with all reverence, God might as well stop at once, and claim no penalty, for the penalty goes on forever; and forever has no end. Not even a moiety of the penalty could be inflicted; for a moiety can be measured, but infinity has no measurement.

Besides; if the penalty is to be infinite in duration, might not a very mild punishment suffice as well as a more intense punishment? For the sum total would be equal. One infinity of duration and of suffering is equal to another; so there would be no need to inflict any severe suffering; infinity of duration would make the suffering infinite in amount, however slight it might be in quality. So if an eternity of suffering could be endured, which it cannot, the smallest degree of discomfort would be sufficient to meet the demand.

And it is not to be forgotten that all these assumptions are based upon the theory that God is only strict justice, whereas we know that He is love as well; yes, and wisdom; so we believe He would find a better method than the one we have sketched, even if it could be realized.

Thus, the whole argument breaks down. It is but a human invention, and not a good invention; designed, it would seem, to support a foregone conclusion. Ten thousand times better than all such absurd elaboration is the simple statement that "His mercy endureth forever."

HESITATING AND HALTING.

Some time ago I presented this argument to a Presbyterian minister, not suspecting in the least that he was wanting in orthodoxy. He said the argument was conclusive, and that there is no such thing as eternal punishment. I have since spoken with many ministers on the same topic; and in no case was there any opposition. Many are hesitating and halting between this view and the one that has so widely prevailed. Especially is there a natural hesitation to speak about the matter publicly. The main question is, Is it true? If it is, it is good news indeed for our poor, suffering world.

I may state here that there is another possibility which, if it had been adopted, would have avoided all necessity for punishment. I refer to the fact that when Adam and Eve sinned, God might have cut them off, and so avoided the hideous tale of suffering that has resulted since. Or He might have rendered them childless, and have thus anticipated and avoided all difficulty. Either of these measures would certainly have been fraught with far less suffering than the consignment of so many uncounted

millions, or even one individual, to eternal torment. The fact that any better measure was available, is a strong argument for the ultimate restoration of the race.

We believe that God has made a provision for all mankind, ten thousand times better than the cutting off or rendering childless of the first pair. When we realize that the whole race is yet to be restored, we begin to see something of the unbounded love and wisdom that rule through all time and all eternity. Even the suffering of the present may be made conducive to our ultimate happiness and glory. A little farther on we may see that sin and suffering have been permitted for a time as an object lesson for all eternity. In view of such a possibility we feel like exclaiming, "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom, and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Very recently there came to me a new idea; and it came with such suddenness that I can believe it was a suggestion from another Mind. I was listening to a very able and thoughtful sermon. The theme was the retention of the Canaanites in the land, instead of driving them out. We read that "When Israel was strong, they put the Canaanites to tribute, and did not utterly drive them out." The very natural and telling application that was made by the preacher was, the many compromises with evil that are made in our own time for the sake of gain.

BARBAROUS IDEAS.

But the preacher took the ground that it was a very cruel and barbarous thing to exterminate those nations, or to put them to the sword. He dwelt on the barbarous ideas that then prevailed, contrasting them with the toleration that prevails now. He said that we convert men now, instead of killing them. He took the ground that the extermination of those people was due to an entire misconception of the divine command.

It struck me at the moment that such an idea was entirely contrary to the fact. Here is the command, and the substance of it was often repeated: "Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree; and ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place."

The divine command, then, was not misconceived. We may see plainly now its wisdom and real kindness. But Israel made an unwise and unholy compromise. By this compromise that was made, the surrounding heathen tribes in some cases were spared. The consequence was that there was a constant incitement to idolatry. Again and again, Israel fell into this sin, and paid severely for their crime. I think it is not too much to say that had Israel inflexibly carried out the divine command, the Jewish nation might have been the strongest in the world to-day.

But what has all this to do with the theory of Restoration? A great deal. In the light of that larger truth, extermination was not the harsh measure that at the first glance it seems. It was simply the removal of those incorrigible races to other scenes where they would have better chances of reform; and it was the removal of a constant snare to Israel.

Under the old idea, those heathen tribes were consigned to eternal torment. Even for the women and children there was no escape. They were not fit for Heaven; so they must all go to hell; that was the naked, bald idea. Even if the children were saved, how were they prepared for the scenes of bliss? But when we once entertain the idea of a future process of reformation, a door of hope is opened for the worst of them.

A SHAFT OF RIDICULE.

That seems to be the grand solution of what has always seemed a barbarous proceeding. The want of such a solution has furnished Ingersoll and men like him with many a shaft of ridicule at the so-called merciful God of the Old Testament. This larger view shows Him to be all He claims; that His mercy is not confined to this short span of time; that it is from everlasting to everlasting.

One great advantage in believing in Restoration is, that any good influence effected on any person will have its legitimate effect in the next life. I need to explain. There are many persons who are not believers who yet rise to a high plane of character. But no matter how high they may rise, if they are not Christians the old theory would consign them to everlasting torment. No doubt, degrees of suffering are recognized, varying with the goodness or badness of the sinner. Still, if a person is not a Christian when he dies, the idea is that he must go to eternal torment, be his moral character what it may. Thus, any good influence that may be exerted upon him here is largely or entirely lost. Even the incentive to do him good in a great degree is neutralized. An inevitable, though it may be an

unconscious, arrest, is thus put upon every good impulse to benefit men except they are true Christians.

But consider how different is the incentive on the Restoration theory. In that case, you can have the certainty that any good accomplished in this life will have its due effect in the next. A man may not be a Christian, but he may have risen to such a high character in this life that he will not have to pass through very severe pains and penalties in the next. There is, therefore, every incentive to do the most and the best we can for all men, be their character what it may, and whether they are Christians or not. We may be sure that any good effect attained will not be lost.

Is not this a strong plea for good works? And is it not a strong argument that Restoration is true? Is it to be supposed that the divine government is based on any possibility of good efforts being abortive? Surely, in God's perfect government of the world it is so arranged that every good influence will have its due effect. To my mind, this consideration makes strongly for the truth of the theory of Restoration.

It may possibly be charged on me that all through this discussion I have ignored divine justice. I would say that nothing could be farther from my intention. To be sure, I have tried to magnify divine love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" for the world. There we see a depth of love that will never be fathomed. But then, He gave His Son. There was infinite justice, too. "He spared not His own Son." "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." O, mystery of mysteries! The union of infinite love with infinite justice! I believe that will be the marvel of eternity. Let that stand, whatever I may seem to say to the contrary. In dealing with problems that are so high, and yet so deep, it would not be surprising if there are some apparent contradictions. Our limited range of thought, and our poor vehicle of speech, make seeming contradiction almost inevitable. But there will be harmony by and by.

I would say here that in what is advanced there are some repetitions. But often these are in new connections, and are therefore in order. Besides, I have not been careful to avoid repetition; for I have in view many readers to whom such topics as are treated here are comparatively new, and by all such, repetition is needed.

The foregoing are some, but only some, of the arguments that occur to me in support of the theory of Restoration. It may be that in some cases I may be considered too dogmatic on a theme which is involved in much obscurity. But apart from the manner, judge of the matter. Is it not reasonable? And is not the very conception of it like the rising of a new sun in a new world?

I have claimed that such views are reasonable. They may appear strange—even impious—at the first glance; but the longer the mind dwells upon them the more reasonable they will appear.

The old view is not reasonable; and that is one of its most damaging features. For all true religion is reasonable. In fact, religion is one of the most reasonable things in the world. It is so in God's mind, who sees all parts of it in all their relations. But our view for the present is limited. We see only a part of the divine scheme. But it is a great consolation that "what we know not now we shall know hereafter."

Let us always remember that our highest thoughts of God's wisdom and love are as nothing to the reality. In this regard I believe the future has revelations that will surprise us. Oh, yes; the words will come true by and by, in a larger sense than our poor faith can anticipate: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

XVI.

THE CASE OF SAUL.

Divine Methods of Reclaiming Men—"The Chief of Sinners"—Changed in a Moment—No Violence Done to His Freedom—Yet Sovereign Power—The Mystery of Grace—View of McCosh—Supremacy of Conscience—Sir Isaac Newton's Alertness of Mind—Reason and Intuition—Capturing the Most Incurable—Evil Environment—Suffering a Necessary Factor—Agony of Remorse.

We must remember that God has ways and means of reclaiming men that we do not see ordinarily put

forth in this life. But we do see singular exhibitions of grace and power sometimes. I have referred to the case of Saul. Witness his conversion. He was a blaspheming, malignant persecutor. He says he was "exceedingly mad" against God's saint. It is said that he "breathed out threatening and slaughter." He said that he was the "chief of sinners." Possibly that was no mere rhetoric. He may actually have been the worst of mankind.

But in a moment he was changed. He was utterly transformed. His blasphemy was turned to prayer. From that day forward he would do anything, or go anywhere, or suffer the utmost persecution, if only he might serve Him whom he had before persecuted and blasphemed. And what was it that effected such a marvellous change? The Lord manifested Himself to him, and spoke to him; that was all. How we adore the grace and power that can work such marvels!

And in the life to come who can say but such marvels will be used, and with similar effect? We simply do not know, but we can see that such means can be used, and we can imagine that they will be, especially in the case of those who had no chance before. In such a case, the period of suffering may not need to be greatly prolonged. In other cases we can imagine that the suffering may be long continued before the sinner repents.

And it is wonderful how, in the case of Saul, no violence was done to the freedom of his will. He was no mere machine. He was simply taken captive. He willingly, gladly, surrendered. He could say afterward, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." It was a case of divine sovereignty combined with human freedom. It may be that we shall never understand how these two forces unite. But one thing we do know; it is the Lord's way, and it is marvellous in our eyes. Meantime, we take these words of Tennyson as the best definition of the mystery that we know:

"Our wills are ours, we know not how;
Our wills are ours, to make them thine."

Who can say but some such divine yet free constraint may be exercised in the life to come?

It will be seen that I do not think of freedom as the prime faculty of the soul. I rather think, with McCosh, that conscience is supreme. And why? For two reasons: First, conscience deals only with questions in the moral realm. This gives it a peculiar dignity and sacredness. It does not concern itself with questions of mere expediency, but with questions of right and wrong, and discriminates intuitively between truth and error. Yes, even in mathematical truth I think there is an element of morality. If a man could believe that two and two are five, he would appear to me a worse man, morally, for so believing. So then, conscience rather than freewill is the highest quality of the soul, because it deals with questions solely in the higher realm.

SIR ISAAC NEWTON'S OPINION.

Then, as I have said, there is another reason why we think of conscience as our highest faculty. That is, that it acts instinctively. It has a sensitiveness of feeling towards questions of right and wrong, and of truth and error. This seems to me to be a higher faculty than mere reason. It seems to ally conscience more closely with the divine. We cannot think of God arriving at conclusions by reasoning. He is conscious of the truth without any intermediate process of reasoning. It is said of Sir Isaac Newton that he perceived at a glance the truth of many propositions that had to be tediously reasoned out step by step by inferior minds. We recognize at once the superiority of such an order of mind; and in the realm of morals it is such a faculty with which conscience is endowed.

Thus in both respects that have been indicated, freewill seems to occupy a lower plane. For one thing it has largely to do with matters in a lower realm. It concerns itself, not chiefly with higher questions, but often with matters of the most trifling character. Its daily operation is mainly with the commonplace. And besides, it has not the gift of intuition but of reason, and often of conflicting reason. For such reasons as these freewill—important as it is—must be conceived as a lower faculty than that of conscience. Because conscience operates solely in a higher realm, and because its operations are of a higher quality, I think of it as a superior function of the soul.

If there is too much theory here, consider the matter for a moment in its practical aspect. We often see that one strong will can dominate a weaker one, without in the least impairing its freedom. There is no doubt that the weaker will is as free as ever. It freely yields to the influence of the stronger will. And it may yield intelligently. It is easy to conceive that influences may be brought to bear on it by which it is captured, without losing a particle of its freedom.

THE WORST OF MANKIND.

We may reasonably conceive, then, of Christ acting on the most incorrigible of mankind, and entirely capturing them without in the least depriving them of freewill. What influences He may bring to bear upon them, who can say? What unfoldings of eternal love He may reveal are impossible to be imagined. We can thus believe that the worst of mankind might be captured and redeemed. I appeal to the capture of Saul of Tarsus as an example of such a possibility. What a door of hope is opened here for our lost race!

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It may be asked why such a redemption is not effected in the present life. Let us beware of intruding into divine mysteries. We might as well ask why Saul was not arrested and redeemed before he made such a havoc of the church, and went down to such a low depth of infamy. Or we might inquire why he was arrested at all. Or we might inquire why God went to that idolatrous people in Ur of the Chaldees, and took Abraham from among them, and made him not only the progenitor of the chosen race, but one of the greatest and most noble men in history. Yet God in his sovereign pleasure took that course, leaving the rest of those heathen people in their idolatry. And so through all the ages we see the manifestation of God's electing favor. I say, we must beware of intruding into the divine mysteries. To all such inquiries we can only say, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

THEY MAY YIELD SPEEDILY.

It is well, however, to remember that the environment may be much more favorable in a future world than here. There are many who are almost of necessity sinners from their youth up, because of their evil surroundings. It would be hard to expect them to be much better than they are. But their surroundings may be entirely different in the next life; and they may yield speedily to the better influences. We see such effects so often in this life that we may well cherish hopes for their larger operation in the next. No details are revealed; but we can imagine this as a reasonable possibility. In such a case there may be the most surprising reformations.

It may be objected that I have taken very little notice of suffering as a necessary factor in the process of future redemption. I may say that I have always had it in view; but we have no details as to the nature of it, or the duration of it, or how it will be inflicted. That there will be suffering I have no doubt. But I regard suffering rather as reformatory than punitive.

Take the example of Saul, to whom we have just referred. If ever there was a case of sudden conversion, surely we see it there. It did not take him long to pass out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. But he went through a very agony of remorse. He passed through such a horror of darkness that for three days and nights he did not eat. Certainly, the intensest suffering accompanied his conversion.

In the light of such facts as these we can see how possible, and how reasonable it is to expect the most wonderful transformation in the next life. The greatest sinners may become the greatest saints. I have taken the case of Saul to show how such marvels of redemption may be effected in a future life. Possibly his case is the most notable that has occurred. And yet, who can say? From cases that we have known we can well believe that there are thousands of such cases that have never got into any history. But we have seen enough to warrant the belief that in the next life there will be marvels of spiritual transformation.

XVII.

ETERNAL SEPARATIONS.

An Everlasting Pang—David and Absalom—Strained Ideas of Late Momentary Repentance—King Solomon—King Saul—The Gracious Character of Sympathy—George Eliot's View—A strong Argument for Restoration—Heresy of a Minister's Wife—The Minister's Orthodox View—Wonderful Goodness of a Criminal—Where Will He Finally Go?—Our Very Imperfect Friends—Glossing Over Their Faults When They Are Gone—Our Instinctive Hope for the Worst—Restoration the True Solution—A Final Era of Joy.

We might glance here at another difficulty which is solved by the theory of Restoration. Apart from this theory, those who are saved we think must have everlasting regret that friends whom they have known and loved are not with them. Suppose those friends are annihilated. Will not the knowledge of that fact be an everlasting pang to the friends who have attained eternal joy? To think that those who were so dear to them were worthy of no better fate! To think of the honor and glory which might have been eternally theirs, which now they have forever missed! What a joy it would be, too, to have their companionship! But that joy is eternally forfeited. We think that if regret in heaven can be, it would arise from the fact that those whom we hoped to meet there we shall never see.

Take one case as an illustration. Is it to be conceived that David would not have an everlasting regret in regard to his son Absalom? We know how his heart was broken when he received the tidings of Absalom's death; yes, though Absalom was utterly opposed to him, and was trying to wrest the kingdom from him. It is one of the most pathetic scenes in Scripture history, when the king received the news of his son's death. We see him going up the stairs to the chamber over the gates, and we hear his sobs and cries, and his broken words: "O Absalom, my son, my son Absalom; would God I had died for thee; O Absalom, my son, my son."

Now can it be supposed that David will have no regret for his son Absalom if he does not meet him in the abodes of bliss? The tenderness of heart that characterized him here will surely not be suppressed there. Will not the absence of his son be an everlasting pang?

It may be supposed—it has been supposed—that somehow at the last moment, Absalom repented, and was saved. We put no limit on the grace of God; but such a supposition is entirely gratuitous. It is a far-fetched invention to square with the idea of supposed final perseverance. The difficulty is, to believe that Absalom died in a state of grace. How much more likely it is that Absalom came to himself in the next life; and that his father could endure—yea, rejoice in—his absence for a time, knowing that the result would be everlasting reunion.

And so with Solomon. We read of the high hopes that David cherished about Solomon, and how Solomon so terribly declined in character in his later life, and died, so far as the record goes, in apostasy from God. If he is absent from heaven, will not his absence cause David an everlasting pang?

And so with King Saul, and many more whom we recall, both in Bible history, and in our own experience. The unsolved difficulty stares us in the face; but it is no longer a difficulty, but everlasting harmony, when we believe in Restoration.

GEORGE ELIOT'S IDEA.

And if the fate of extinction would thus cause everlasting regret how much more would the knowledge that our friends are in everlasting torment. Surely our knowledge of such a fate would be unendurable. Would there not be everlasting distress in that world of joy? In fact it would be no world of joy. We shall have the same nature then as now. It will be only ennobled and purified. Certainly sympathy—which is one of the noblest of our feelings—will be more tender and intense than now. George Eliot said that she estimated her entire moral condition by her capacity of sympathy. We may imagine then the horror of the situation if we have to think of our friends as being in everlasting torment.

Surely this is a strong argument for Restoration. We might endure, and even rejoice in, a mild degree of suffering on the part of friends, if we knew that such was a necessary process of purification, and that by and by they would rise to eternal happiness. But to think of them as being forever in torment—inflicted for punishment, and not for purification—would be unspeakable torture. We have indeed heard of zealots who taught that the saved would even rejoice in the sufferings of the damned, as the effect of God's glorious justice. For the credit of humanity we would believe that such lurid representations were rare, and but the product of temporary excitement, or perhaps a mistaken zeal for orthodoxy.

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I was lately staying at a Presbyterian Manse. The minister was from home, but his wife engaged me in several topics of conversation. Among other things she instanced the case of a family some members of which were saved, and some were lost; and she asked me if there was any means of explaining away the agony of such a separation. Thinking she might not be ready for a thorough discussion of the subject, I tried to dismiss it by some casual remark. But it would not do; again and again she returned to the point. At length I stated plainly that I did not believe in endless torment, or eternal separation. At once, and with evident relief, she responded that such was her own view.

Now I think that case is typical of thousands and thousands more. They have been brought up in the orthodox idea of eternal torment; it is enshrined in their thought by the sacredness of childish

association; they have the conception that it is an evidence of soundness in the faith. But by and by, when they begin to think, their heart rebels; the idea hitherto accounted true seems opposed to every humane instinct, and much more opposed to that mercy that is from everlasting to everlasting. There is thus a sea of conflicting ideas, and they know not which way to turn. My hope is, that when they read these pages they will see that a large pan of the church has been for a long time under a dark cloud of error, and that their humane instinct is but a dim reflection of Eternal Love.

The lady referred to told me that her husband's view and hers do not agree. It is his idea, she said, that the point of view of the saved will gradually be uplifted until it coincides with God's, and that then they will be able to contemplate the tortures of the damned with perfect satisfaction! And this is orthodoxy! O, for the day when this dark pall will be lifted from the heart of the world!

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Thus men have distorted the finest feelings of their nature that they might view with complacency the eternal torments of the damned. They really believed, or tried to believe, that such was God's feeling and attitude; and to that divine ideal they felt that they must aspire. It was surely hard work, and would naturally issue in a degree of sanctimoniousness and unreality. Yet it was necessary, if the doctrine of eternal torment were true. But the moment that doctrine is seen to be untrue, what a change of ideal! Then it is discerned that all this hardening process is opposed to the best that is in human nature, and utterly contrary to the character of God. We can never estimate the spiritual loss that it has been to mankind to have had such ideas of the Infinitely Merciful One.

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When it is once discerned that there is no endless torment, but that suffering in the next life is a divinely appointed means of reformation, how the mind is enlarged in the contemplation of the wisdom, power, and love of God! Yea, and what an uplift, and what a new direction, is given to our ideas of human perfection and blessedness! If there were nothing else, we have surely here a strong argument for final Restoration.

Eternal blessedness is consonant with our nature; and though details of it are not revealed, it is reasonable to believe that it will ultimately be attained. But eternal suffering is abnormal and repugnant. Especially is it so as we rise in the moral scale. As a worthy ultimatum it cannot be entertained. It is far more reasonable to believe that under the perfect government of God, sin and all its resulting pain will finally be done away.

Further; it would be hard to find a case of such utter wickedness as not to have some mixture of good as well. That gives us the reasonable hope that ultimately the good will triumph. And sometimes we find great goodness mixed with great evil. Just now I notice a very affecting report in the newspaper of a criminal in whom there must have been a wonderful mixture of good and bad. He was convicted of a serious crime, and sentenced to three years in the penitentiary. When he was leaving the city under arrest, and being taken on board the train that was to convey him to the place of confinement, a number of his late companions in crime appeared on the railway platform. They had come to bid him good-bye. And it was no formal leave-taking. With tears and sobs they flung their arms about his neck, and kissed him. So affecting was the scene that the policeman in charge was utterly broken down. But the man had to go to prison; and the chances are that the evil influences of prison life will dissipate much of that extraordinary goodness which must have been in him to develop so much affection.

Be that as it may, the question must suggest itself to every thoughtful mind, "Where will that man go should he die in the meantime?" He is far too good for the world of woe; yet he is not fit for the better world until his criminal propensities are eliminated. How reasonable it is to believe in—we might say what a moral necessity there is for—a process of development of the good, and elimination of the evil. On the principle that what is good will survive, and that the evil will be extinguished, we can hope for nothing less. And when we remember that all men, and all conditions, and all worlds, are under the control of Him whose love is from everlasting to everlasting, we may believe that such a man's final destiny is the inheritance of the saints.

Another argument is derived very naturally from the case of departed friends whose spiritual condition was doubtful. Have we not known of acquaintances who passed away, of whose spiritual condition we could have no well grounded assurance? But the moment they were gone we became charitable, glossed over their faults, and hoped for the best. Would it not be a far more reasonable thing to do, to imagine them as having passed into some purifying process, from which they would emerge in due time? In the case of many we can believe that such a purifying process might involve no great suffering; and we could endure the thought of it when we believed in its glorious issue. In fact we would become more like God Himself, who is inflicting pain every day with a view to moral perfection by and by.

Well do I remember spending an evening with a personal friend. He was a man of sterling character. In his ordinary demeanor, however, he was a very John Bull of a man; you would not think there was a particle of sentiment in his whole composition. During our conversation, reference was made to the case of departed friends whose spiritual condition was doubtful; and before I knew, my friend utterly broke down and wept. No doubt he was thinking of one in such a case. I could not at that time offer him the consolation of the larger hope; and it is doubtful if with his education he could have accepted such consolation. What a solace it will be, when we can think of departed friends in whom the work of grace was manifestly very incomplete—possibly not begun—as having gone, not into a state of hopeless, everlasting torment—but as having passed into a state where the work of grace will be completed.

But speaking of the reformatory process, there is one circumstance that may seem to indicate that it may be very long. I refer to the fact that Satan has been so long incorrigible. I take him of course to be a conscious personality. In the Word of God I suppose there are a hundred references to him as a person. If you have any doubt on that point look up the references, and I think you will be convinced.

Now, since his temptation of Adam, and we know not how long before, Satan has been persevering in a course of evil. Does not that fact seem to indicate that sinners must have a long period of suffering in the next life before they are reclaimed, if they ever are?

WE HAVE NO DATA.

To this view a number of answers may be given. In the first place, Satan is of another race; we know very little of his former history, or the circumstances of his fall; and we know not if any means for his recovery have been provided. In the next place, a few thousand years may be but a span in the long sweep of his existence. Then further, he does not seem to be in a state of suffering at present. There is a hint in the Book of Revelation that he will be so by and by; and we know not what may be in store for him. As intimated before, some think he will be restored; others think he will be annihilated. With such ignorance of the circumstances of the case, it is plain that we have no data for forming an opinion one way or the other. At the same time, we cannot help being in sympathy with the words of Burns; they certainly touch a chord in all our hearts:

"Then fare ye weel, auld nickey Ben;
O wad ye tak' a thought and men'
Ye aiblins nicht—I dinna ken—
Hae still a stake."

As I have said, there are those who teach that Satan will be ultimately extinguished. And they lay down that theory with great positiveness. While there are some hints to that effect in the Word of God, it does not seem to me that they are clear enough to warrant us in being positive. We would hardly expect so much. It is not our business to know much of "other world" affairs for the present.

So far as we may judge, it would appear instead that Satan's long continuance in sin gives some hope of his ultimate Restoration. For the question will naturally arise: Why should God spare him so long, if He foresees that he must be extinguished at last? Why not extinguish him at once, and thus avoid so much temptation to evil? I am by no means curious on such a question. I merely cite these possibilities to show that the subject is utterly beyond us.

It really comes to this, that on such high topics it is wise to be reverently silent. But with the fact that we do not know, we ally the privilege of eternal hope. So we would say with Tennyson:

"Behold, we know not anything;
We can but trust that good shall fall,
At last far off, at last to all;
And every winter change to spring."

If you dissent from some of the views I have advanced, I would ask you not to be hasty in forming conclusions. It may be that after some years you will see differently. I was myself many years before coming to entertain these views. But they were growing on me, perhaps unconsciously, and at length they took this pronounced form. It may be so with you. The ideas which you entertain now may be perhaps the result of early training as much as of patient study. Let us ever look for divine guidance. We have the promise. "Ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free."

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I cannot but forecast the new era of joy that will come to the world when the doctrine of Restoration is generally accepted. It will be like a burst of sunlight from behind a dark cloud. The world is sad; and I am convinced that one cause of its sadness is the dark view of endless torment that has so long

prevailed. The view, from long habit, may be held almost unconsciously; but the dark shadow of it has cast a heavy gloom over human life. What an uplift all hearts will have, what a radiance of joy will be infused into life, we can now but dimly anticipate. Then we can adopt the dictum of Browning, and it will be no cheap optimism:

"God's in His heaven;
All's right with the world."

After all, that is only our poor human way of expressing the majestic thought, "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

XVIII.

NOT REALLY BELIEVED.

Present Enthusiasm for Missions—Former Lassitude—The Basis of Missionary Enterprise—Supposed Damnation of the Heathen—If Really Believed, Would Drive Us to Frenzy—Ministers' Monday Meeting—Pretence Cuts the Nerve of Enthusiasm—Restoration the True Incentive—Effective Because Reasonable—Torment Not Really Believed—The Heart Often Truer Than the Head—Necessity for Preparatory State—Could not Have Details Revealed—Orthodoxy of the Torment View—Trying to Believe It—Be Not Afraid of the Truth—Extreme Calvinists Signally Honored—The Reason Why—Our Innate God-given Convictions—Meagre Expenditure for Missions—Tacit Acknowledgement That Endless Suffering Is Not Believed.

Would not the doctrine of Restoration, as I have tried to commend it, cut the nerve of enthusiasm for missions? No, I think not; but it would provide a saner basis for them. For what is the true basis of missions? Is it not the command of our Lord to preach the Gospel to every creature?

That the command extends down to our own time is clear from the fact that the disciples were commanded to go into all the world. They could not do so in their own time; so the command extends to their followers. Moreover, Christ said he would be with them until the end of the world. But they were not to continue to the end of the world; so the command was intended not only for them but those who would succeed them. Thus the duty comes home to the Christian church now, and cannot be evaded.

INCREASED INTEREST AND SYMPATHY

And all the Christian churches are agreed that this duty has been laid upon them, The churches are alive to this duty as they never were before. And this is one of the most hopeful signs of the age. It does seem at times as if society were getting worse at the core; yet in regard to sympathy and helpfulness, especially in regions remote, it is certainly improving. And this increased interest and sympathy relates both to the bodies and the souls of men. This age has witnessed marvels of kindness and enterprise that would have been impossible only a few years ago.

Surely it is time. It must be confessed that the church in general has been very slow to take up the subject of missions with any zeal. There was great activity in the first century of the Christian era, and a little later. If it had only been sustained until the present time, possibly the whole world would have been evangelized. But there was a deplorable lapse of interest and of effort. And it was long continued. We might say that for sixteen hundred years the church was almost indifferent on the matter. But now there is renewed enthusiasm and enterprise.

This long lapse of interest should certainly make us moderate in our interpretation of Scripture. Here were the Saviour's words, clearly before the eyes of the church for sixteen hundred years; and it seems we did not see or hear them. He commanded us—and it was one of his last commands—to preach the Gospel to the world. But we took almost no notice. The world might have been dying in heathenism, but we seemed not to care. We had not the spiritual alertness to realize that the words of Christ had any application to ourselves. Such torpor of spiritual understanding and sentiment, I say, ought to keep us from being unduly positive, or self-assertive, in our interpretation of Scripture. Happily there is

renewed interest now; and in this all the churches are agreed.

WHAT BECOMES OF THE HEATHEN?

But what is the basis of all missionary enterprise? I have said that it is the command of Christ. It is not necessary to believe that the heathen who do not hear the Gospel are lost. There were certainly some heathens who were not far from the kingdom of God. The possibility of men being raised to such a high spiritual level, even without the Gospel, gives us a hint of the ways and means that God can use for the ultimate salvation of the heathen world.

And it is to be noted that Christ made no special appeal to us in order to evoke our enthusiasm for the heathen. He gave no hint that there is but the one alternative of damnation if they do not receive and accept the Gospel. He had evidently no morbid hysteria on that ground. He simply gave the command; and that ought to be sufficient. He knows what possibilities of grace are in reserve; but that was not the time nor the place to speak of them.

Besides, if we could realize that every heathen who does not hear and accept the Gospel is doomed to eternal fire, the thought would drive us to frenzy. We cannot bear the thought of a person, though he were an enemy, being even burned to death. In such a case, there would be a crowd of ardent sympathizers, though it were known that their sympathy would be unavailing. Failing all relief, there would be sighs, and groans, and prayers on every hand. It is not possible to witness unmoved such a scene of suffering. And it lasts but a short time. But the supposed case of the heathen is endless agony; and it does not move us. The only conclusion is that it is not really believed. We may think we believe it; we may count it orthodox to believe it; but if we did really believe it, it would drive us to insanity.

A QUASI ENTHUSIASM.

Therefore any argument drawn from the supposed damnation of the heathen is unreal. We may stir up a quasi enthusiasm; we may be moved for the time; but we are not by any means moved to the level of the fate which we deplore. If we really believed it, as so many profess, we would spend our last dollar, and make all but superhuman efforts, to take the Gospel to the heathen. But instead of that, we are content to hear at long intervals a few points of information from the minister, take up a collection for Foreign Missions, to which perhaps we contribute a few cents or dollars, and then dismiss the whole matter from our minds.

Some time ago I was present at a ministers' Monday morning meeting. A brother read a paper on Foreign Missions. He and his congregation are noted for their enthusiasm and liberality in that sphere. When he was making his plea for increased liberality and enterprise, he pictured the heathen dropping into eternal torment one by one—I think at the average rate of one every minute. When he had done there was a period of profound silence on the part of the brethren who were present. I saw that many of them were confused. They could not in their hearts endorse the brother's argument; and it would be unorthodox to contravene it.

COULD NOT REST IN THEIR BEDS.

It will thus be seen that the church is in a very unsettled position on this question. Good men are trying to believe what in their hearts they repudiate. They think it a sign of soundness in the faith to believe in the doctrine of eternal torment. If they really believed it they could not rest in their beds at night, nor follow their usual avocations by day. But happily they do not really believe it.

Thus the theory of eternal torment has this everlasting drawback that men will not believe it. It may be, and has been, accounted the orthodox view; and men may try to believe it, but as a matter of fact they do not. To think that a person will suffer forever, and ever, is beyond actual belief. Just think for a while of torment without end. Lengthen out the time in your imagination, and when you have reached the utmost stretch of imagination, then think that eternity is only beginning, and that through eternal cycles of aeons it will go on forever and ever, and ever.

It used to be a favorite method of illustrating the eternity of torment to suppose that after a million of years one grain of soil were taken from the earth; then after another million of years, another grain; then after another million of years, another grain; and so on until the whole of the earth had disappeared; then repeat the proceeding ten thousand millions of times; and then eternity would be only beginning! Imagine, if you can, a soul in torment all these uncounted ages; and then think of the process being repeated over and over again, without end, without end, without end! No man can believe it.

But if you tell him he is to suffer until he is reclaimed, he can believe that; it comes easily within the scope of his imagination—yes, and of his reason too. Hence it will have more effect on a man's conviction, and will produce a greater influence on his life, to be told that if he dies impenitent he will suffer until he repents, and is reformed.

Now when we consider the natural affinity which the mind has for truth, and when we recognize the impossibility of believing in endless torment, we have a strong presumption that the theory is not true. At all events, in the present unsettled state of the question would it not be a wholesome thing to take the more limited view of suffering, and have men believe it in their inmost souls, rather than the view of eternal torment, with a hesitating, half hearted presentation of it, and consequently without producing genuine conviction? This is a serious question; let all serious minds ponder it.

The want of candor in expressing definite conviction on this subject seems to me to be a formidable barrier to church union. The following article of mine on this point lately appeared in *The Homiletic Review*:

The contemplated organic union of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches in Canada has not yet been consummated. One thing that involved some delay has been the discovery of a basis of doctrine that would suit the three churches. At length such a basis has been formulated. It contains one statement, however, which I am rather surprised to see. It says that the doom of the finally impenitent will be "eternal death." Now what does that mean? Might it not be honestly taken to mean two very different things? Might it not be taken to mean "eternal torment" or "eternal extinction?" The manifest ambiguity of such a statement would seem to me highly objectionable. I quoted the phrase to two thoughtful friends, and asked them what it meant. They made a long pause, and said they did not know.

If the phrase has been adopted on purpose to make it the expression of the two views referred to, such a course is surely wanting in candor and honesty. To be sure it is a Scripture phrase; but inasmuch as it is taken to express two very different views, it ought not to be adopted. By all means let us be clear and simple and straightforward.

There has been too much vagueness on the part of preachers on this most solemn theme. Lately I heard a preacher speaking of unsaved men as "miserable failures, going out into the darkness." Now what did he mean? Either he has no definite idea himself, or he judged it unwise to express it; or he was afraid to express it. Does not such a statement as I have quoted pander directly to infidelity?

Surely the time has come when we ought candidly to recognize that on this question there may be a legitimate difference of opinion. There are men whose godliness and ability are beyond all question, who hold diverse views on this matter. Whether it be the theory of eternal torment or extinction or Restoration that is held, let us concede all honor and confidence to the men who hold it. The more of that spirit we really possess, the sooner will the divine light break upon our souls.

With regard to a basis on which conscientious men can really unite, is it well to go so much into detail? Mere creeds will never conserve the truth. Men will think, whether we will or no; and men will have diverse views. Do we not put a premium on dishonesty by constructing a creed for all details, and expecting men to subscribe to that creed? Have we not had too much of that in the past? A noted official in the Methodist body told me lately that he does not believe in eternal torment, but that if it were known, he would lose his position. But eternal torment is in the Methodist creed, and he had professed his adherence to it. It is so with many Presbyterians. I have spoken privately with several, and not one professed to believe in that doctrine. But we say, "Truth is mighty and will prevail." Yes, I believe it will; but it would surely prevail faster if we were always loyal to it. Besides, is there anything that makes more directly for the degeneracy of character than such evasion?

To avoid all peril of this kind, how would it do to take for a basis of doctrine this simple statement, "I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God?" Or, "I believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to contain the Word of God?" Then, with further "light breaking from God's holy word," we would not need to expunge anything from our creed, or add anything to it.

Lately I heard a most fervid appeal on behalf of missions. But the speaker really gave no worthy, definite incentive, by which the appeal would be made effective. He gave no hint whatever as to the fate of the heathen if we failed to Christianize them. He did not say they would have to pass through pains in the next life necessary to their reformation. Nor did he say they would be extinguished at death, or some time after. Nor did he say they would drop into eternal fire. Any of these three possibilities if duly presented, would be more or less an incentive to action. But he simply referred to the heathen being saved in some vague way, which almost meant nothing. The nerve of enthusiasm for missions is cut if the appeal cannot be enforced by some definite incentive to action; but usually there

is no such incentive advanced. There is no doubt or hesitation as to the positive part of salvation; but as to the negative part of it there is no clear-cut deliverance.

The presumption is that there is usually no definite conviction. In the evangelical churches there is some faint survival of the doctrine of endless torment; but the preacher rarely or never presents it; it may be because he does not really believe it; or because he knows that the people will not believe it. I say, would it not be better to present the idea of Restoration, and present the view strongly, with a pronounced accent of conviction? Not only is such a course in my view required by the claims of honesty, but the effect would be better beyond all computation.

I have just referred to the incentive that we have to impel us to a world-wide Evangelization. We have seen that the command of Christ was practically unheeded for many hundreds of years. We can imagine that the church will never again lapse to that low level of insensibility.

But, along with the command, we have a worthy incentive in the doctrine of Restoration. If we can only realize that by faithful missionary effort the heathen will require a pruning and development when they pass out of this life, will not that be an effective and worthy incentive to the best efforts of which we are capable?

It may be thought by some that the old doctrine of endless torment would be more effective as an incentive. At the first glance it may appear so. What could be more effective than the warning that men will drop into an endless hell if they do not receive the offers of grace before they die? That was relied upon formerly. It was thought that no other warning would have such force. But as a matter of fact it failed, except that in some cases it produced a temporary panic. And why did it fail? Simply because it was not heartily believed. Men might think they believed it; they might try to believe it; they might think it orthodox to believe it; but as a matter of fact they did not believe it. If they had, they would have moved heaven and earth to avoid such a doom, both for themselves and others.

The doctrine of Restoration has no such disadvantage to contend with. It is credible in the highest degree. It is an urgent incentive, and a reasonable one. If a sinner goes out into the next life unreconciled to God, there must be a terrible looking for of judgment. He will be reclaimed; but the age-long pruning he may have to undergo is a fearful thing to contemplate. If he knew his Lord's will, and did it not, he will be beaten with many stripes.

There is nothing incredible to him in that. He sees the reasonableness of it. An appeal of that kind will move him, when any picture of hell fire will have but a small effect. I believe this is the standpoint to which the churches will have to come.

In corroboration of the idea that even Christian people do not believe in eternal torment, I would say that lately I met a lady, and I inquired the latest news of her friend who had slipped and broken his leg. She said that she had just come from the hospital, and that he was dying. She added that it would be a relief when he was gone, for he would then be out of pain.

Now this lady is a member of a church that professes to believe in eternal torment, but she had no idea of her friend going into everlasting suffering when he died. He made no profession of religion; but that circumstance seemed to give her no concern. Is not such the general feeling? And thus it is that many practically repudiate their own creed. They hang on in theory to the doctrine of endless suffering, because it is in the creed of the church; but practically they deny it. Would it not be far better to believe steadfastly in a state of discipline and purification? Would not that be a much better incentive to prepare for the end of life, than the half heathenish idea that there is nothing whatever to fear? As a gentleman said to me lately, when speaking of the Roman Catholic fear of Purgatory, "The Methodists and Presbyterians would need some kind of purgatory too."

It may be objected that no details are revealed of such a preparatory state; and some may be so foolish as to think that this is an argument against its existence. I have surely only to remind you that neither have we details of the blessedness of heaven. In fact we could not have such details. That would probably involve a great deal of the history and condition of other worlds, which would be utterly confusing to us at present, and would serve no good end. We have enough to stimulate hope, but not enough to pander to curiosity.

That the advocates of eternal torment have no really deep conviction of its truth, let me also give a quotation that I have just met with:

"That its advocates themselves have little or no faith in it is very manifest from the fact that it has no power over their course of action. While all the denominations of Christendom profess to believe the doctrine that eternal torment and endless, hopeless despair will constitute the punishment of the wicked, they are all quite at ease in allowing the wicked to take their own course, while they

themselves pursue the even tenor of their way.

"Chiming bells and pealing organs, artistic choirs, and costly edifices, and upholstered pews, and polished oratory which more and more avoids any reference to this alarming theme, afford rest and entertainment to the fashionable congregations that gather on the Lord's day, and are known to the world as the churches of Christ and the representatives of his doctrines. But they seem little concerned about the eternal welfare of the multitudes, or even of themselves and their own families, though one would naturally presume that with such awful possibilities in view they would be almost frantic in their efforts to rescue the perishing. The plain inference is that they do not believe it."

Then follows a reference to the "Mental Bias" of the early translators, as accounting for their erroneous translations, because they were just breaking away from the old papal system. Then the later translators are scathed for what the author calls "duplicity and cowardice" in continuing such errors.

Consider, too, that we are God's own children. This is no mere figure of speech. We are as truly God's children as our children are our own. If our children are evil, it is our glory to reclaim them. No matter how bad they are, we could not bear the thought of even one of them being in torment. But according to some, God can bear the thought, can even exult in it—that myriads of His children are in torment of the most horrible kind, and that for ever and ever. And it is conceived that this is so, notwithstanding the story of the Prodigal Son!

More than that, we hear the Father sighing out of His heart the broken words, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!" Yes, and we see Christ weeping over the doomed city, and we hear His pathetic words. "If thou hadst known—O if thou hadst only known the things that belong to thy peace!" And yet God is conceived of as contemplating with equanimity the everlasting torment of His own children.

Happily, however, men do not really believe in eternal torment. They may try to do so; it may seem orthodox; they may profess their faith in it; but their heart is often better than their head, and they do not really believe it. On this point, I will transcribe a paragraph from Rev. Arthur Chambers. It is so true, and so well expressed, that it will commend itself to every candid mind. He says:

"Thank God for the happiness of humanity! Man's intuitive instincts are better than his formulated creeds. The hope is secretly cherished that the grace of God, because it is the grace of an infinite Being, must and will operate beyond the limits defined by a narrow theology. No Christian, however staunch to the pitiless teaching of the school to which he belongs, ever brings himself really to think that any one beloved by him in the World Beyond is irretrievably lost. His creed, perhaps gives him no hope in regard to that one who dies without religion; but his own heart refuses to surrender its hope; and so he keeps his reason, and his faith in God."

I know there are those who accept the doctrine of Restoration, who yet think it an unsafe position to take in the case of some. They cite the case of parties who having accepted the larger view, drift into infidelity. The reason given is, that the doctrine of endless torment has been so long identified with orthodoxy that when that doctrine is surrendered, the vital doctrines of Christianity are in danger of going along with it.

But I do not think we need have any grave fears of that kind. For one thing, we ought not to be afraid of truth having an evil influence. On the contrary, it is a sanctifying power. Hence our Lord's prayer. "Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth." So if a man drifts into infidelity it is not the truth that leads him there. I imagine it is half truth that leads him astray; and a half truth is often really a falsehood. So if a man takes up the idea of Restoration in a careless or flippant spirit, thinking chiefly of it as a happy escape from punishment, it is a half truth; to him it is really a falsehood. But let him consider also the facts by which the idea of Restoration is sustained; let him be imbued thoroughly with these; and I think there will be little chance of him drifting into infidelity. I think on the contrary he will be far more devout. He will be let into such views of the wisdom, love and power of God as will more than offset any tendency to rationalism.

Besides, we know not what punishment, either in duration or intensity may await sinful men in the next life. We do not claim that suffering is abolished. Very far from that. We only claim that it is not of endless duration, and that it is of a reformatory character. If a man is thoroughly imbued with such ideas, he will be very far from being a sceptic. He will realize that the truth is a sanctifying power.

On this basis you give him something that he can really believe. You can tell him that he must suffer until he surrenders. He can believe that thoroughly. It appeals to his reason. But if you tell him that whether he surrenders or not, he must suffer forever and ever and ever, without any hope of release through all eternity, he does not really believe that; it is entirely beyond him; and it makes but a slight impression. The truth is the main thing; and the truth is divine; yes, divine; both in its nature and

effects.

We have to remember, too, that there is such a thing as turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. The German proverb that the best things may become the worst, is along the same line; but it is commonplace compared with the trenchant words of Jude. According to him, even "grace" may become "lasciviousness." We have there a solemn warning. It does seem to me that really worthy thoughts of God are not compatible with the idea of endless torment.

In favor of the doctrine of eternal torment, it may be claimed that God has signally honored many men who hold, or have held, this view, and that therefore that view is the correct one. In the matter of revivals, especially, were not such men signally owned and honored? Witness the earlier Methodists, and later the Salvation Army. Especially think of Mr. Finney, under whose ministry there was a mighty revival.

ENCUMBERED THOUGH IT BE.

But there are two or three facts that ought to be remembered in this connection. One is, that God is often pleased to own even a small modicum of truth, encumbered though it be with a great deal of error. Such may have been Finney's case in particular. He preached the Gospel; that was the secret of his genuine success. Men were simply frightened by his lurid descriptions of hell. So extreme was he in this respect that strong men trembled, and Finney had to be pulled by the coat tails that he 'might go no further. So it was not his awful descriptions of the lost that were so blessed. It was the modicum of Gospel truth, presented with great earnestness, that really told.

Let me give two examples of the same principle from New Testament history. There was a certain Jew named Apollos. It is said of him that he was "mighty in the Scriptures," that he was "instructed in the way of the Lord," that he "mightily convinced the Jews." Yes; but at the same time he "knew only the baptism of John." Great as that man was, he was taken in hand by those obscure Christians. Aquila and Priscilla, who "expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." The truth he had was encumbered for a time with a great deal of error; but it was owned and blessed notwithstanding.

WANT OF PROPORTION.

A more notable case was that of Peter. You remember his glorious response to our Lord's challenge, "Whom say ye that I am?" Peter promptly and gladly responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." By that confession, Peter has covered his name with immortal honor. You remember, too, his sermon on the day of Pentecost, when three thousand men were converted. You recall also that sermon a little later when the converts numbered five thousand. Yes; but the man who was thus owned and honored really believed that the Gospel was for the Jews alone. Notwithstanding all his advantages, he was really a subject of that delusion. And he continued so for some time. Three miracles had really to be wrought to convince Peter to the contrary. This want of proportion in the man's illumination is really marvellous. It goes a long way to explain many revivals since that time.

Thus, Peter—grand apostle though he was—and notwithstanding that for three years he had been the bosom friend of Christ—had very narrow views as to the intended scope of the Gospel. He believed that the Gentiles were common and unclean; and it took, first a vision, and then a miraculous experience, to cure him of that insular idea. But he was cured, and never went back to his former contracted ideas.

So, it seems to me, the Christian World of to-day needs a vision along the same line; but larger. They have to take in the millions of un-Christian people in Christian lands, together with the uncounted millions of heathen during all time; and they have to learn that from the divine standpoint not one individual of them all is common or unclean. We believe that every one of them is destined for glory, and honor, and immortality. It may take a long time, and methods which as yet we know nothing of, to work out that glorious issue; but we cannot conceive of anything less as being worthy of eternal wisdom, power, and love.

From this point of view there can be no uncertainty about the end. Whether we think of God as desiring the highest character and happiness of His creatures; or whether we think of the means that Christ has used, and is using, to secure that end; or whether we think of the capacity of man for attaining the highest and the best—we can have no doubt that suffering will ultimately be done away, and that God will be all in all! That is, everything in everybody! Let us try to realize it. It is no mere golden dream.

I heard lately of a boy in Chicago under whose addresses people were being continually converted; and it was said there was nothing peculiar about his addresses but want of grammar. It is thus that God often chooses the weak things of the world to confound the mighty. The mere fact, then, that successful

revivalists believed in the old theory of eternal torment, is no proof, nor even an indication, that it is true.

What a recoil we experience now when we read Jonathan Edwards' appalling description of sinners in the hands of an angry God! Even our beloved Spurgeon fell into this most horrible mistake. In all such cases it was logical enough. These men were but honestly following up the necessary result of their creed. Yet it may be well to quote Spurgeon's own words, that we may see what the old doctrine infallibly leads to. He says: "When thou diest, thy soul will be tormented alone. That will be a hell for it. But at the Day of Judgment, thy body will join thy soul, and then thou wilt have twin hells; thy soul sweating drops of blood, and thy body suffused with agony. In fire, exactly like that we have on earth, thy body will lie, asbestos-like, forever consumed, all thy veins roads for the feet of pain to travel on, every nerve a string, on which the devil shall forever play his diabolical tune of hell's unutterable lament."

No doubt such descriptions are awful. But are they not reasonable, if eternal torment is true? It is no use to turn away awe-stricken from such details; they are quite in harmony with the main idea of torment. Get the main idea right, and all such details will disappear. In fact, they have largely disappeared now. Why? Because the main idea is really disbelieved. Yes, disbelieved, though it is confessed. Surely, this disloyalty to what in our inmost souls we believe to be the truth is disloyalty to the Spirit of Truth.

Spurgeon's words are horrible enough; but they are far exceeded by others. Take the case of the Rev. J. Furniss, in a book of his on the "Sight of Hell." This author would be fiendish, if he were not silly. Here are his words:

"Little child, if you go to hell, there will be a devil at your side to strike you. He will go on striking you every minute forever and ever without end. The first stroke will make your body as bad as the body of Job, covered from head to foot with sores and ulcers. The second stroke will make your body twice as bad as the body of Job. The third stroke will make your body three times as bad as the body of Job. The fourth stroke will make your body four times as bad as the body of Job. How, then will your body be, after the devil has been striking it every moment for a hundred millions of years without stopping?

"Perhaps at this moment, seven o'clock in the evening, a child is just going to hell. To-morrow evening at seven o'clock, go and knock at the gates of hell, and ask what the child is doing. The devils will go and look. They will come back again, and say, 'The child is burning,' Go in a week and ask what the child is doing. You will get the same answer, 'It is burning,' Go in a year and ask. The same answer comes, 'It is burning.' Go in a million years and ask the same question. The answer is just the same, 'It is burning in the fire!'"

This is lurid enough; but is it not logical? It does seem to me that in this as in many other instances there is a great want in the popular imagination. Men will think it reasonable to believe in endless suffering; consider it even a sure sign of orthodoxy; sometimes speak of it glibly; but when the idea is drawn out into detail, they will shrink back from the detail in horror.

The fact is, that the theory does not bear to be presented in detail; when it is, even its supporters are horrified. Yet the most lurid details are strictly logical. For there is no conceivable detail of agony to be compared with that of its eternal duration. The most dreadful suffering that can be imagined pales almost into insignificance compared with the idea of endless—endless—endless duration. Even a mild discomfort, if eternally prolonged, infinitely surpasses in amount the most fearful suffering that has an end. But men will accept the theory of endless suffering almost as a commonplace, yet recoil with horror from any presentation of it in detail.

The fact that it does not bear to be even thought of in detail goes a long way to discredit the whole theory. A little development of the imagination here would be more effectual with the majority of men than all the logic in the world. And let us not think that imagination is some kind of a wild and exuberant offshoot of pure reason. No; it is a God-given faculty, and of a quality almost divine. As Ruskin says, "It is the greatest power of the soul."

Just think for a moment that sane men and kindly men could really believe in the lurid descriptions which I have quoted! Yet this passed for orthodoxy! Is it not a marvel that men ever believed it, or tried to believe it? Only think of infinite love, infinite power, and infinite wisdom, combining to accomplish such a result! It is almost beyond belief that men of ordinary feeling, and with the Bible in their hands, ever tried to believe it. For the truth must commend itself to the heart as well as to the mind. If it does not, we ought to be on our guard.

On this most serious aspect of the case, I quote from Carlyle. He says:

"What the light of your mind, which is the direct inspiration of the Almighty, pronounces incredible, that, in God's name, leave uncredited; at your peril do not try believing that."

It will be seen that what I have elsewhere called an "affinity for truth," Carlyle calls the "direct inspiration of the Almighty." There is no contradiction. The one phrase notes the effect of our intuition; the other recognizes its origin. At all events, this mental and moral repugnance to the theory is a strong indication that it is not true.

On this most serious aspect of the case, let us pause for a moment longer. The more our mind dwells on it the more pronounced is our conviction that it is not true. Just think of one soul being consigned to everlasting torment. Through ages and ages interminable, to be succeeded by other ages forever and ever, the agony is prolonged, with the absolute certainty that forever and ever there will be no release or mitigation.

Would not the very thought of such a fate drive us insane? Surely it would; yes, though the supposed criminal had committed the most atrocious crimes, and though he had done us the worst conceivable wrong. But here we are, giving our minds to business, our hearts to pleasure, and our nights to sleep, yet all the while professing to believe that one of our fellow creatures, perhaps one whom we have known, it may be one whom we have loved, is in everlasting torment. Yet if a stranger was confined in a burning house, we would make the most frantic efforts to relieve him; and if we failed, the very memory of his fate would be painful to us all our days.

But the case we are trying to imagine is very different. He is no stranger, but one with whom we were acquainted; perhaps one of our own family; possibly one whom we have loved as our own life. And he is not suffering for a few minutes only, but forever and ever, without any possibility of relief. Yet we go about our business or our pleasure without giving him a thought. Is there not a strong presumption that deep down in our souls we do not really believe that he is in eternal torment? We may try to believe it; orthodoxy may tell us that it is true; but do we really believe it? Our innate, God-given conviction may turn out to be nearer the truth than our creed.

And let it be remembered that the supposed torment is eternal fire; yes, eternal fire. We may conceive of the fire as being changed somehow to suit our spiritual condition; but not less is it eternal fire. And we calmly think of such endless fire as a possibility!

Yet we have thought of but one person as enduring such a fate. But if it is the portion of even one, it must be so for countless millions. For millions have lived and died in heathenism, and millions are dying in heathenism now. Other millions in Christian lands are passing away in practically the same condition. And all of these are our brothers and sisters of the human race. By far the great majority of them had no chance of hearing the joyful sound. Yet some of them rose to sublime heights of character. And yet they are all consigned to this holocaust of everlasting fire!

Consider also that the Being who is thus supposed to deal with these uncounted myriads is a Being of mercy inconceivably tender; of a love that is from everlasting to everlasting; of a wisdom that is infallible; of a power that can use any means for the execution of His will. Then ask yourself this question, and answer it truly from your own soul: Is it possible to believe that such a Being has nothing better in store for His own children? Surely, surely, such a fate as we profess to believe must have had its origin in the heart and brain of a fiend! That it can be seriously entertained by devout and reasonable men we think must be accounted for on these grounds, that it comes to us with the stamp of orthodoxy, and that it is not candidly examined. Otherwise, to every sincere and candid mind, and to every heart that has any genuine feeling, it would seem revolting and incredible.

With regard to the possibility of a man trying to persuade himself that he really believes with mind what he utterly repudiates with his heart, I have already quoted some very trenchant words from Carlyle. In another passage, he speaks of "the most orthodox of mortals making the impious attempt to put out the eyes of his mind, to persuade himself to believe that he believes." Then, he says: "Away with it; in the name of God, come out of it, all true men."

Such forced complacency in the knowledge that loved friends are consigned to hopeless torment, is repugnant to our humanity; yes, and most repugnant when humanity is at its best. On such themes some people do seem to lose their common sense and common feeling. If there were nothing else, such outrageous conceptions ought to be enough to discredit the whole theory of eternal torment. But we can endure the idea of temporary separation, when we know that such separation is necessary, and that it will issue in everlasting reunion.

As to the sincerity of our professed belief that thousands of the heathen are every day dropping into everlasting fire, let me give a diagram which I have just met with, showing the relative expenditure in the United States for various commodities per year; and the amount contributed for Foreign Missions.

And yet, this is a liberal showing for missions, compared with that of many other Christian countries.

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Liquor
===== Expenditures for Meat
===== Tobacco, Cigars, Etc.
===== Bread, including Flour and Meal
===== Iron and Steel
===== Dairy and Egg Products
===== Sawed Lumber
===== Cotton Goods
===== Boots and Shoes
===== Woolen Goods
===== Sugar and Molasses
===== Fruit
===== Public School Education
===== Furniture
===== Tea and Coffee
== Salaries of Ministries
= Foreign Missions

Now, will any person pretend that we are sincere in our professed belief that the heathen are dropping by the thousand every day into everlasting fire? Surely, if we really believed that, and if we believed that there is only one way of averting such a fate, we would move heaven and earth to avert it. The common-sense inference is, that we do not really believe it. We may flatter ourselves that we do; long usage may aid the deception; but let us be honest with ourselves, and see how the case really stands. We may think that it would never do to drop the traditional attitude; but let us be sure of this, that self-deception can never be an aid to true religion. In this as in all things, let truth have the right of way.

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I have just seen an extract from a Canadian Journal which speaks for itself. Here it is:

"To enter Canada costs a Chinaman \$500. Last year thirteen hundred and eighty paid the tax, the treasury of the country receiving from them \$690,000. *The Missionary Witness* makes the statement that combined contributions of the Christians of Canada for the evangelization of heathen nations was only about half as much as the Chinese paid for the privilege of living in Canada. It asks, Is it not amazing that in prosperous Canada 1,380 men cannot be secured who will voluntarily tax themselves to send the Gospel to heathen lands as much as 1,380 heathens are taxed by us to land on our shores? The love of Christ constraineth us! How much?"

Have we not here a practical acknowledgment that the idea of the heathen dropping every moment into endless fire is not really believed?

As I say elsewhere, this revulsion of heart and mind is a strong plea that the doctrine is not true. And it is a fearful thing to quench that inner light. I have already quoted Carlyle's trenchant words on this point. But I have just now met with another saying of his of still more scathing intensity; and I would ask you to ponder his words well. He says: "What is incredible to thee, thou shalt not, at thy soul's peril, attempt to believe. Elsewhither for a refuge, or die here. Go to Perdition if thou must—but not with a lie in thy mouth; by the Eternal Maker, no!"

To be sure, such courage and candor might cost dear. Some years ago there was an able and conscientious minister of the Canadian Presbyterian Church who took the risk of being candid. He was a most lovable man; able, eloquent, active, helpful, humorous, candid, tender, devout; in fact, possessed of nearly every desirable quality. But he had the larger hope; and one day he unguardedly gave expression to it in the words of Tennyson:

"O yet we trust that, somehow, good
Will be the final goal of ill—"

and so on. Immediately he was a marked man, and the question was not allowed to settle until he was placed on trial for heterodoxy. There was considerable turmoil and excitement; but ultimately some kind of a compromise was reached by which his orthodoxy was vindicated. He told me that if he were once out of the church of which he was then minister, he could get no other. I suppose he meant that he could not accept the standards of the church; and of course that attitude would debar him.

SOUNDNESS IN THE FAITH.

At the same time it is but right that the Church should protect its soundness in the faith by some form of subscription. The trouble is, however, that the form now in force is subscribed to with reservations. Then what reservations? They are not defined; so it comes to this, that each subscriber makes his own reservations.

As evidence that such is the case, I may say that no minister in the Presbyterian Church of Canada, with whom I have spoken—and I have spoken with many—really believes in endless torment. Yet that doctrine is clearly stated in the Confession of Faith which ministers formally accept. The corrective of such a state of things in my opinion would be the adoption of a simple evangelical creed that men of the most diverse views on other matters could honestly accept.

Even in reference to the manner in which the creed is accepted in the Presbyterian Church of Canada, there seems to me to be a want of candor. When a minister is being received, or installed in a charge, he is asked if he is prepared to sign the Confession of Faith. He is not asked to sign it then and there. To express his willingness to sign it does not seem to be so much of a tax on his candor as actually to sign it. Such a proceeding seems to me to put somewhat of a premium on insincerity. It is well known that there are reservations. Would it not be more honest to accept a short statement of evangelical truth, which could be accepted without any reservation?

XIX.

WORKING MEN AND THE CHURCH.

Efforts to Attract Working Men to the Church—Restoration Would Largely Solve the Difficulty—Common Sense of Working Men—Glorious Expansion of Truth—Recasting Traditional Views—The True Basis for Unity.

There is one aspect of this question that is of vast importance, but which, so far as I know, has not been recognized. I mean its bearing on the relation of working men to the church.

It has to be admitted that working men in general are shy of the church. Yet almost every expedient has been resorted to in order to make the church attractive to them; and still they do not go. Some ministers think that working men are to be caught by secular preaching, and so the Gospel of success has in certain instances almost displaced the Gospel of salvation. Other ministers, and earnest ones, give a Gospel talk in workshops and factories during the dinner hour. The men civilly attend and listen, but they do not go to church. Other ministers assume a forced familiarity of manner with the men, in order to create the impression of equality. Some actively engage in sports in order to come into closer contact with working men; and still the working men do not go to church. Why?

I believe that a candid and outspoken avowal of a belief in a process of purification beyond death would go a long way in solving the whole difficulty. For sensible working men see very clearly that such a process of purification is necessary for all, whether they are Christian or non-Christian. Working men know beyond all doubt that there are in their own ranks many men of far higher character than the average nominal Christian. Yet it is taught that the Christian, however low in character he may be, goes straight to everlasting bliss; while the non-Christian, though of the noblest character, is consigned to everlasting torment. Common sense, and justice, and fitness, all rebel at such a dictum. This is especially the case with those who have not been early instilled with orthodox doctrines, as many of the working men have not. This is the real equality of man—the fact that all men are sinners, and that all need purification. Only let these facts be honestly and definitely avowed, and I believe the chasm would largely be bridged over.

Of course common sense and observation would recognize a marvellous difference in men as to their need of purification. It would be conceived that some would suffer but very slightly, or not at all; but their eyes would be opened to see truth of which they had never dreamed. Others might need a long and painful discipline to purge them of evil habits which they had contracted through long years. But equality would consist in the fact that all need to be purified in a greater or less degree, to fit them for a higher or lower place in the better world.

Would not this be a wholesome Gospel for working men, and for all men?

Would it not be a powerful appeal to any man to be able to say to him,
"You must repent, and leave off your sins now; for if you don't do it
now, you will surely do it in the life to come?"

I do not believe that working men are specially averse to spiritual ideas. But they are amenable to common sense, and justice, and the general fitness of things. Let them know that we are all on the same plane as sinners; be very emphatic that Christ died for the whole race; that the plans and purposes of God are not limited to the present life; that somehow and at some time grace will completely triumph over sin; and I venture to think that working men will be responsive. And in my view, this will be no curtailment of the truth, but a glorious expansion of it.

Surely none of the evangelical churches would treat such a Gospel as heresy. Even if they did, I do not think that the truth would suffer in the long run. Special attention would thus be called to the truth with the result, I believe, that the world would take a step forward into the light.

We read that "all Scripture is profitable for doctrine." Now is the doctrine of everlasting punishment profitable? If it is true it must be profitable. But is it? Possibly it may be claimed that it is profitable on certain occasions. Then on what occasions? I never heard it directly preached on any occasion since I was a child. It may be hinted at, or implied in some vague way; but so far as I know, it is never insisted on as a vital and saving truth. Yet, it is of such tremendous import that the fair inference is, that the preacher himself does not believe it, or that he is afraid to avow his belief of it, or that he has an instinctive feeling that to proclaim it clearly is never "profitable." Yet, if it is not profitable, it is not "doctrine," but error. And if it be error, it is the most dark and dismal error that ever found its way into this sinning and suffering world.

And if this doctrine is not preached in this Christian land, is it preached in heathen lands? I do not positively know; but I have a strong conviction that it is not. I would challenge any missionary to say that it is. Then why not, if it is "doctrine" and therefore "profitable?"

I can well believe that hosts of so-called converts might be frightened into an avowal of Christianity by such preaching. If a simple heathen could really believe it, would he not at once adopt Christianity as a means of escape from everlasting fire? But what would such a so-called conversion be worth?

I have more faith in missionaries than to believe that they would be so insane. They would realize that such a doctrine would either repel the heathen, or win them to an unreal acceptance of Christianity. In either case, what would be accomplished? So the missionary would naturally postpone this "profitable" doctrine until some more convenient season, and probably that more convenient season would never come.

I have heard many missionaries speaking of their work among the heathen; but not once did I ever hear of the "doctrine" of everlasting fire being used as a converting power. Yet the Scripture declares that all doctrine is "profitable." If it cannot be used, the inevitable inference is that it is not doctrine, and is not true.

Here then is an idea for the Layman's Missionary Movement. How many men in that movement really believe in eternal torment? Like myself, many of them may have been taught the catechism which speaks of "God's wrath and curse both in this life, and that which is to come;" also "the pains of hell forever." But what is their belief now? In many cases do they not utterly repudiate such ideas? In other cases, and I think the great majority, they may not have seriously thought of the matter at all. But their instincts would strongly favor the more liberal view.

Ought not all men in that great movement seriously think of the matter now? Are they satisfied that such a doctrine should still remain in our creeds. For it does certainly remain in the creeds of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. Surely it is not enough to say that it is not preached. Any very zealous missionary might preach it, and you could not forbid him. And when some cultured heathen would find out that such a doctrine is in our creed, would it suffice to tell him that we do not preach it? When he would realize that on a matter of such awful import, we really professed one thing, and believed another would he have any use for our Christianity? Besides; if the Spirit of Truth has taught us the truth in our inmost souls, and yet if we repudiate that truth, how shall we give our account? We quoted Carlyle, who has a most scathing warning for all those who act such a double part.

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It seems to me then that the Laymen in this Movement should prepare the way for an honest and candid world-wide mission. Let them give themselves no rest until this doctrine of eternal torment is expunged from the creed of both the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches. If it is false, and known to be false, no worldly wisdom should be allowed to retain it. Apparent missionary results might be

slower, but would they not be more real, and in the end far more numerous? And what a boon it would be, not to have to suppress or disguise the Eternal wisdom, the Eternal Power, the Eternal Love!

This reformation seems to me to be specially laid at the door of the Laymen's Missionary Movement. It will readily be understood how ministers of undoubted ability and consecration, are backward to inaugurate such a movement. That many are in hearty sympathy with such a reformation, I know well. Only let the men in the Missionary Movement take a constitutional initiative in the matter, and they will be surprised how many ministers will be with them. I know for a fact that many are longing for just such a reformation.

I believe the time will come—perhaps has come—when the evangelical churches will recast their traditional opinions on these doctrines. And in recasting their opinions, who knows to what extent they may further the spirit of unity? May the glorious day be hastened!

I can fancy that some will say that throughout this whole treatise I have appealed too much to reason, and have not given sufficient prominence to Scripture. I think any such charge would be unfair. Look back and see if it is just. I have taken Scripture and reason combined; and let it ever be borne in mind that both are equally divine gifts. On the highest plane they are in perfect unison.

I have dealt with the plainer passages of Scripture especially, and chiefly with those that combine with reason. This is a common sense treatise. I deemed it better, therefore, to make essential matters plain, even to repetition, than to indulge in long disquisitions about mistranslations, and such like matters, which in the case of many would only leave the question in a haze. Besides; we have to remember that truth is truth, and will never contradict itself. It is for opponents, therefore, to controvert the positions I have taken, rather than to criticise what I have omitted. If the latter course would hold in argument, it would be easy enough to make out a case for anything.

I would ask you personally then to think over the entire question for yourself. Do not suppose that the matter is too high for you. I think it is, in the main, quite on the level with any ordinarily intelligent mind. Of course, it involves some deep problems; but these can be postponed for the present; it is the main question that claims paramount attention.

Some preachers delicately approach the idea with hints and inuendos and mild threatenings, which are really worse than utter silence. I heard a preacher speaking lately of men as "utter failures, going out into the darkness." Now what did he mean, or did he mean anything? Again; preachers speak of "eternal death," which might mean eternal extinction or eternal fire. And yet that vague phrase is actually proposed as one of the bases of union of the churches.

A short time ago I wrote *The Toronto Star* somewhat along these lines. The editor wrote a most responsive article, concluding with these strong words:

"This question and all that hangs upon it must be faced. A man has a right to know what his church teaches. The man in the pew—the man even who is not in the pew but who might be—has a right to expect that the man in the pulpit not only believes what he preaches, but preaches what he believes. A religion made up of hidden folds and mental reservations, a creed marked by evasions and ambiguities, cannot reach and warm the heart of the world."

There is hardly a more vital truth known to us than the one I have tried to commend. For its candid consideration we need the illumination of the Holy Ghost. But we have the promise that if we ask for Him He will be given. We have also the Word of God. And then we have reason. It is a divine gift, never to be despised. With these sources of illumination we have the twilight now. Yes; but it is the twilight of the eternal morning!

XX.

THE SEEN AND THE UNSEEN.

Beauty Evolved from Chaos—Future Capacity of Motion—Gleams of the Invisible—Changing into the Divine Image—Crying Out for God—From Barrenness to Beauty—The Glow of the Firefly—The Effulgent Divinity —Sunset on the Prairie—Universal Sense of Beauty—Guardian Angels —Death as Seen from This Side and That—Sunset on the Yellowstone River—A Drop of Dew—Reality of Heaven—The Literal and the figurative—The Spiritual Body—Expanding Glory of Creation—Sunset in Dakota—

We have been dealing with matters that are related chiefly to the next life. But let us not forget that such matters have a close relation to us now. There can be no doubt that there are correspondences between this world and the world unseen. I would notice a few of these correspondences, so that we may realize how closely we are related to both worlds. If we keep our mind and our heart open to see such correspondences, we shall often be surprised at the vividness of their suggestion. But they are suggestion only. They are not proof. That is not their function. But when an idea is seen in itself to be probable, a vivid illustration will confirm it.

The world is full of such correspondences between the natural and the spiritual. To discover one of these correspondences is in my view a greater achievement than a discovery in science. It is greater because it is a discovery in the realm of spirit instead of the realm of matter. It is no wonder, then, that Emerson says that "such correspondences, if adequately executed, would be the poem of the world."

I will notice a few of those correspondences, that have occurred to my own mind. I might cite many more, but I think these few will tend to fortify the conclusions we have been trying to arrive at. I apprehend that many readers who are not fond of argument will feel the force of illustration. Thus they will have a more vivid appreciation of the unseen than can be conveyed by mere argument. To be sure, there is a greater appeal to the imagination than to the reason. But we must not decry imagination except when it runs riot into mere fancy. Ruskin says: "Imagination is the greatest power of the soul."

Only yesterday my boy asked me a curious question. He wanted to know why so many millions of flowers and other beautiful things that men never saw or will see, were created. I said that the very same thought was in my own mind years ago, but at that time I could find no answer. But I found the true solution since. The true solution is, that God is the Beautiful One, and He naturally—it may be of divine necessity—has to express Himself in forms of beauty. So He creates millions of beautiful things that no man or angel will ever see. In so far as they do see them, and their sense of beauty is developed thereby, that is good, but it is secondary. The primary thing is, that the Infinitely Beautiful One naturally expresses Himself—perhaps must express Himself—in beautiful forms.

I have seen the potter working at his wheel; and it is wonderful to see the beautiful effects he can produce. He can take a lump of clay, and from that shapeless mass of matter he can make vessels and ornaments of rarest beauty. He has no machinery but that simple wheel, but by that and the skillful movements of his hand, he can evolve beauty out of chaos. It made me think of the way God evolved this beautiful world out of chaos at first. There is this difference, that the potter uses mechanical power, and he uses his hands, whereas God uses only His word and will. He spake and it was done; He commanded and all things stood fast. But the effect is of the same order. It is the reduction of chaos into beauty; and though we can produce such effects only in a small way and by mechanical means, it gives us a hint of almighty power and beauty. Yea, and that almighty power, as seen here in such beautiful effects, gives us a suggestion of the transcendent glory of the world on high. Not only so, but we have a vivid hint as to the fact that divine power and grace can transform a sinner into a saint.

One function of the glorified body will be its amazing capacity of speed. Along this line we have even now and here suggestions of wonderful possibilities. You have noticed when on the train the swarm of insects that keep easy pace with your rapid flight. Those insects not only seem to enjoy a race with the train, but to show how easily they could leave you behind, they indulge in all sorts of airy gymnastics, at the same time whirling to and fro, and up and down. What marvellous power of motion is there, if you only think of it! How inconceivably rapid must be the movements of those little wings. It is computed that some of those insects open and close their wings no less than two hundred times in a second. It is amazing. And is it not suggestive of the capacity of motion with which this body may easily be endowed when the cumbrous flesh is changed into the immortal, ethereal body? Since those tiny insects are so wonderfully endowed for their little life here, so aimless as it might seem, what glorious capacities may not be in reserve for us, God's redeemed children, who are to live forever, going forth on God's errands through the wide amplitudes of uncounted starry worlds.

It is truly amazing to notice what glorious effects God can bring out of materials that seem so simple and common. Out of the earth's dark soil, by the action of light and heat, He calls forth myriads of flowers. A heavy cloud, that contains nothing but murky vapor, by the rays of the setting sun is made to flash and glow like a burning sapphire throne. The falling shower, by another action of the sun's light, is painted with rainbow colors so pure that they seem to be reflections of heaven's own beauty. Surely God has flung these glories round about us here to give us hints and promises of the unimagined glories of the beautiful, better land. Not only so, but we have a vivid hint as to how the earthly can be transformed into the image of the heavenly.

It is a law of our nature that we insensibly change into the likeness of that which we behold and

admire. Even in outward, material things we sometimes see the working of this law. There is a gorgeous sunset. Come out of the dingy house, and gaze on the scene. The western sky is ablaze with purple and crimson and gold. The radiant clouds stretch out in feathery, fantastic forms, like angels' wings; or pile themselves up in solid blocks of glory, like celestial mountains; or shape themselves into golden bars, like heaven's pearly gates.

As you gaze on that scene, I notice that the lines of your face soften, the eye that was hard grows tender, the whole face loses its careworn, earthly expression, and it is suffused with softened, heavenly light. Your countenance is just reflecting a little of the glory of the skies. And so, when with the spiritual eye we see the beauty of Christ, we begin to be somewhat like Him. When His moral glory is flashed upon us, it transforms us more or less into His likeness. Beholding, though only in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are changed into His heavenly likeness, from day to day.

Going west, you pass through what seems an endless waste of sage-bush and sand. Perhaps this has continued all day long, and you retire at night expecting to look out again in the morning on the same dreary waste. But in the night the scene has changed. When you look out in the morning the first thing you see is the broad Columbia River, with its banks of green; beyond the river, mountains rise, clothed in green and yellow and purple; then an open space in the nearer mountains reveals others in the distance, enveloped in a blue haze, and crowned with gleaming snow.

What a blessed change from the experiences of yesterday, and how easy and unconscious the transition. And so it will be with many in passing from this life to the next. Dreary and monotonous their life has been, and it seemed at times as if it might go on so forever. But they are nearing the heavenly land; and some night, perhaps when they are not expecting it, they will leave the dreariness and desolation all behind them; they will awake in a world of beauty such as human fancy never dreamed of.

Well do I remember the night when on seeing the sudden glow of a firefly there flashed on my mind the idea of the ease and naturalness with which, after all, this fleshly body of ours may become immortal and glorious. If an insect like that can transform itself at pleasure into a little star, who can say what latent power may be lodged in the body of a glorified saint? Truly, "it doth not yet appear what we shall be." No; but we have hints of it that may well fill us with an adoring hope and joy.

There were times when Christ's eternal power and Godhead could not be quite obscured by the fleshly body, but would shine out through this tabernacle of clay, as we may suppose the shekinah glory of old would shine through every crack or crevice in the temple. It was a hint of the coming glory in which we may all shine by and by.

There is a divine sense of beauty implanted in every one of us. Have you never noticed how the beautiful things in the shop windows attract all the ragged urchins of the street? Yes, they may be ragged and dirty, but the divine instinct of beauty is in every one of them. Whatever is really beautiful—whether it be a beautiful face, or a beautiful sky, or even a beautiful ribbon in a window—is sure to attract and fascinate them.

Now this instinct, which is so universal, is intended, I believe, to have its final and full development in God. He is the Source and Essence of all beauty. All the beautiful things that surround us here are but glimmerings of the Eternal Loveliness. These beautiful things educate and develop our taste for the final and full fruition of the very beauty of God. When we see Him—and not till then—will our sense of beauty be satisfied.

It is curious and very charming to notice the variety of effects of sunsets. I saw a sunset on the Yellowstone River which, though not remarkable in itself, suggested to me the boundless variety of effect. Glinting and shimmering through the green foliage of the trees the distant river was aglow with crimson and gold, reminding me of the celestial "sea of glass mingled with fire," And if we have such beauty and variety here, what unimagined beauty and what endless variety must be there.

Can you cherish the sweet memory of a sainted father, or mother, or child? If you can, that sacred memory will be a purifying, ennobling influence for you all your life long. Our sainted dead are not quite lost to us; the dear face is seen again as the face of an angel; the familiar tones come back to us like music in our dreams. And these blessed memories do not seem to fade; on the contrary, they seem to grow more vivid and spiritual with the lapse of years. Sometimes, when such memories would make us ashamed of ourselves and our sin, we may try to crush them out of sight and hearing. We cannot sin comfortably with those faces before our eyes, and those tones ringing in our ears. But such memories will not be utterly banished; they come back suddenly, when they are not expected; they pursue us like good spirits from a world unseen. Eternity alone will tell how often a course of sin was arrested, and the penitent wooed to a better life by the memory of a sainted friend. I regard these holy memories as God's guardian angels. They follow us with tender ministries of love; they often raise us when we fall;

they lift us above the dull level of the world; they nourish in us higher ideals of purity and blessedness; they foster a more vivid faith in the world unseen.

A dark, heavy, threatening cloud ever spreads the face of the heavens. But that cloud is heavy, and dark, and threatening, only on this side. The other side, if we could but see it, is ablaze with heavenly radiance. We can easily imagine that this storm cloud of ours may be seen on the other side by angels, and that they gaze with admiration on its glowing colors, as we gaze in admiration on the golden glories of a sunset. How different the cloud appears as seen from this side and from that. And we may well believe that it is just so with death. Death does appear to us a very dark and heavy cloud; but it is so only when seen from this side. Wait until we get above the cloud, and then what was gloomy will be radiant. Death has two sides; the dark side that is turned to earth; and the bright side that is seen from heaven.

In many of the glorious scenes depicted in Scripture, especially in the Book of the Revelation, it is not easy for us to say how much is figurative and how much is literal. Sometimes in grand mountain scenery, when the clouds settle upon the lofty peaks, we cannot say what is mountain and what is cloud. If we were near the mountain top we might distinguish; but we cannot do so down here in the valley.

So we have in the Scripture a glorious cloud of symbolism hovering, upon the peaks of the eternal mountains; but we are too far down in this valley to discern between what is mountain and what is cloud. We may hope to get higher by and by, and then what is hazy and undefined will be seen in its true form and outline. "Now we know in part; but when that which is perfect is come then that which is in part shall be done away."

On a certain evening, as night was coming on, I stood on the shore of a romantic watering place. The tide was breaking on the sandy beach. The crests of the waves sparkled with phosphoric scintillations. Like a thing of life, the light flashed along the shore; and the green and blue and amber and white of the rippling waves sparkled like incandescent fire. As I looked at the spectacle I thought, as I had never thought before, of the "sea of glass mingled with fire" described by St. John in the Apocalypse. Yes, we have hints here of the glorious things to be seen there. Surely God has flashed these beauties on the earth and sea that through them we might lift our thoughts and our hearts to heaven.

Passing on the train over the vast prairies of South Dakota, I noticed one beautiful effect. The rough posts of the ragged fence we were passing at the moment were gilded by the rays of the setting sun. It seemed as if those rough, ragged posts were fit material wherewith to make the heavenly gates, each of which we are told is one pearl. It seems to be God's intention that this earth, even where it is least picturesque, should give us hints and tokens of heavenly glory.

It seems in the highest degree probable that all the bodily senses that we possess now will be wonderfully intensified and enlarged when this "natural body" passes off, and the "spiritual body" is taken on. I think we have a beautiful hint of this glorious probability in the invention of the telescope and the microscope. By these two inventions we are introduced to new worlds of which we never before had dreamed. By the telescope we are let into the glory of the immense; by the microscope we are let into the marvels of the minute. We never had really seen either the heavens or the earth before. Now, since by an invention of man our sight has been so marvellously quickened, it is surely easy to believe that it will be quickened in a far greater degree when all the powers of this natural body are renewed and immortalized. So then, while the eye of the spiritual body may sweep the far fields of glory, it may also discover worlds of beauty in dew drop, and leaf and flower.

As the moon shines pure and clear in a muddy pool, so Christ shone here in this muddy, filthy world, without the serene lustre of His purity being ever dimmed or soiled. And so we may shine in our poor human way now, but perfectly later on.

It was my privilege lately in crossing the Atlantic, to witness one of those glorious sunsets, which once seen can never be forgotten. Of course the sun sets every evening upon the sea, as upon the land; but several different circumstances must be happily combined to produce the effect I witnessed. It was a Sabbath evening,—a fitting time for such a scene. The day had been calm and bright, the glassy surface of the sea being broken only by the gentlest of ripples. And now the sun had just gone down. The clouds, from the western horizon almost to the zenith, were piled up like very hills of glory, flashing with crimson and amber and purple and gold. The glowing colors of the clouds were deflected on the sea, with a new and wonderful effect. The gentle ripples of the sea broke up and blended these colors in a manner all its own. What seemed solid in the sky became changeful on the sea. The crimson and amber and purple and gold broke and mingled and glanced and gleamed on the molten sea, until we had before our eyes that very "sea of glass mingled with fire" which John saw in Apocalyptic vision. Oh, surely, God has flashed these beauties on the earth and sky and sea to keep us in mind of the surpassing glories of the beautiful better land.

In the spiritual world, as in the natural, God has made greater lights and lesser lights. Some have more light and some have less. The main thing is, to use well such light as we have. A traveller is making his way home. He is very glad to have daylight, that he may see his way clearly. But when he cannot have daylight, he is thankful for moonlight: and if he has not moonlight he will fain use starlight; and if he has not starlight he will be glad to have even a lamp or taper. The traveller wants to get home, and if so be that he gets home even by a taper light, it is well. And so, I believe that there are millions of heathens who are led home by tapers. Many of ourselves, we hope, God will light home by dim lights. The way seems dark enough, and in the darkness we may stumble and fall; but if we use well the light we have, we shall find our way.

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Here is a drop of dew. It is suspended from a leaf. It glints, and gleams, and glows, in the clear morning light. As you look into it, if you are in a contemplative mood, the drop of dew expands into a world; and what a world of beauty! It seems a very paradise, where the redeemer of the Lord might walk; where angels might soar and sing.

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Some time ago an organist died in the assured hope that he would be the leader of a heavenly choir. It does not seem far fetched to believe that his ambition is gratified. At this very hour he may be a director of those harpers that are harping upon their harps.

Here is a sketch which we may term "Imprisoned." It was suggested to me by a lark flying into the room, and dashing itself against the windows in its efforts to escape:

Oh! birdie from the blue,
This is no home for you!
In spacious fields of air,
Beneath a boundless sky,
Without a fear or care,
You sang, and soared so high;
I wonder much what brought you here
To this dark room's contracted sphere.

Oh, birdie dear, beware!
Poor fluttering thing, take care!
I fear you'll hurt your pretty wings
Against these hard, material things.
Would you were free to rise,
And seek your native skies,
And from those heights no more to roam,
Or seek a lower, earthly home.
And see! I ope your prison door!
Escape, and sing, and heavenward soar!

Oh! spirit from the blue,
This is no home for you.
In fleshly walls confined
Frets the aspiring mind;
Imprisoned here in human clay,
We pine and long to soar away.
The soul would burst these prison bars,
And find its home beyond the stars.

Oh! heaven born soul, beware!
Poor fluttering thing, take care!
Oh do not hurt your spirit wings
Against earth's hard material things;
A hand some day will ope your prison door!
Oh, glad escape, to sing, and heavenward soar!

These are a few of the many suggestions with which nature abounds, pointing our faith beyond the bourne of time to the eternal glory beyond. But we have no corresponding hints of endless wrath. To be sure, there are suggestions of divine anger, but not that God will be angry forever. Like the sun breaking out from behind a dark cloud,—

"Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face."

Oh yes! We believe that sin and suffering will finally be done away. All the ransomed of the Lord will yet come to Zion with song!

I have thrown in these few illustrations by way of conclusion, thinking they may be a pleasant offset to mere argument.

XXI.

THE FINAL DAY.

Everlasting Love—Resources of Infinite Wisdom and Power—Redemption of the Whole Race—Forecast of the Final Day—The Conquest of Love—Christ Is Satisfied—He Is Singing with Joy—Ancient Prophecy Fulfilled—Adoration of the Heavenly Hosts—The Saviour Crowned.

The main subject on which there is a division of opinion in the evangelical churches pertains to the ultimate destiny of the wicked. There are three main points of view. There is the theory of Extinction; there is the theory of Restoration; and there is the theory of Everlasting Torment. Of late years there has been a great change as to which is the correct view. For a long time eternal Torment was held to be the orthodox doctrine. Men tried to believe it: it was the doctrine of the church; and thoughtful men did not like to break with orthodoxy. I can fancy that in cases where it was suspected to be untrue, men recoiled from its examination, and satisfied themselves that it is a mystery beyond human investigation. If a man's feeling stood in the way of his conviction, feeling was repudiated as a dangerous thing in the study of doctrine. So men went on for a long time, even the most devout and kind-hearted, coolly consigning millions and millions of their fellowmen to everlasting fire.

At length a better day dawned. Feeling was discerned not to be so dreadfully dangerous as was supposed. It began to be realized that the heart sees as well as the head, and often much truer and quicker. The fact is that feeling on the part of a man at his best, is no small factor in distinguishing between right and wrong, and between truth and error.

And if in our best moods we have any hesitation in consigning millions of men to eternal torment, the thought will suggest itself—Has not God more reluctance? Then when we think of Him being everlasting love; and moreover, when we think of Him as possessing the resources of infinite wisdom and power, we begin to see that there must be some other alternative.

Extinction would be one alternative. But would not extinction be a frustration of the divine intention, and unworthy of God? Would it not have been better and wiser never to create those millions of men than to extinguish them? That is not like an outcome of the divine Mind, that sees the end from the beginning.

What remains, then, but Restoration? That seems for more consistent with divine power and divine love? But what about divine justice? Will not justice require a penalty, and an infinite one? Well; surely a penalty has been paid, and a penalty of infinite value. So we can see no difficulty on that ground.

But what about man's free will? Will he not persist in sin? Has he not been made a free agent? So if any reformation is forced upon him, would it be a real reformation? Besides, if he were reformed only externally, would he be fitted for a better world?

DIVINE POWER AND GRACE.

Well, though he is a free agent, we believe that divine love and power could turn him, without in the least destroying his freedom. We instanced the case of Saul. In a moment he was overpowered by divine love; the whole man was changed; yet he lost not a particle of his free will. So it is easy to believe that divine power and grace may be brought to bear on the very worst of mankind, with the result that while losing none of their free will, but using it to the full, they are recovered and redeemed. And it is easier to believe this when we realize that suffering will be a factor in the process of reformation. These, and many such considerations have been referred to with all candor. As we survey

them we are forced to exclaim, "O, the depths of the riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God."

One practical word, my dear friend, in conclusion. It may be that this maze of argument only bewilders you. If so, then brush all argument aside, and take the plain Word of God. Take these words in Isaiah: "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Surely, you can believe such a plain statement as that. And yet, even that statement may be too general for your case. Then take the words of Paul: "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." Ah; that is closer. Does not that bring the matter home to yourself? And surely, it is a very personal matter. Be sure of this, that what Paul said of himself is just as true of *you*. The Saviour loved *you*, and gave Himself for *you*. Believe that in your inmost soul, and it will transform your whole character and life. Think of Christ loving you personally, and giving Himself for you personally. Yes; for He was divine, and so in the infinite sweep of His thought He could fix His love on you individually, as though not another soul needed to be redeemed. If you dwell on that thought you will be filled with adoring wonder, and love, and praise.

We forecast such a salvation for the whole race, Christ will be satisfied yet: Oh, He will be satisfied! Let us anticipate the glorious day Love has conquered! The worst of mankind has been won. The last prodigal has come home. Christ is satisfied at last! Ah, He is more than satisfied! Listen! He is singing! Surely the great multitude that no man can number will hush their hallelujahs to hear Him singing! Yes, He is actually singing with joy over the recovery of lost souls. It was written of Him long ago, and the words are now fulfilled: "He will joy over thee with singing." Oh, won't we crown Him then! Won't we

"CROWN HIM—CROWN HIM—CROWN HIM—LORD OF ALL!"

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LOVE'S FINAL VICTORY ***

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