

Popular Theology Brought To The Test

Of Holy Scripture.

By Laicus.

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.”—Acts xvii. 11.

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Oxford: Henry Alden, Corn Market Street.
London: W. Kent & Co., Paternoster Row.
1872.

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Preface.

THE object of the present pamphlet is to place within the reach of all an abbreviated digest of the main arguments for and against some of the most important doctrines now called in question, and exciting the public mind; also to show that, accepting the plenary inspiration and Divine authority of the sacred text, there is yet room for considerable amendment in the views held by what are called Evangelical Christians. Those who would discuss the subject more at large must seek for information from such works as H. H. Dobney on “Future Punishment,” Edward White on “Christ our Life,” etc.; but sufficient matter is here introduced, it is hoped, to become a basis of thought, and lead the enquirer into a more diligent investigation of the infallible Word. It is the bane of all societies that they are too conservative of their respective views, refusing to accept the gradual increase of light. Without, therefore, having the slightest sympathy with the Rationalist, who deliberately sets aside the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, we yet think there is a via media between Rationalism and Evangelical bigotry, and that the more simply and literally the Scriptures are interpreted the greater the probability of a true solution being arrived at. It is a valuable canon of interpretation, that “the literal rendering of the Scriptures is always to be preferred, unless it involves an impossibility or an absurdity.”

It is the earnest desire of the writer that these disquisitions may not only be productive of thought, but lead to the elucidation of truth, and to the better understanding of Holy Scripture.

The Natural Immortality Of The Soul.

THE doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul is so generally believed, that it seems absurd to enquire into its meaning, much more so to question the truth of the doctrine altogether; but the fact is (as we intend to show) that this current teller is merely a human speculation, and, as such, should have no practical influence in spiritual religion. The history of the doctrine is simply this: Plato, the great Athenian philosopher, who lived about 400 years before Christ, first taught it in the Schools (though not in the same form as now expounded), and it was engrafted upon the doctrines of the Christian Church about the second or third century; the early Fathers, Polycarp, Ignatius, Justin Martyr and others not believing it, indeed in their writings they plainly condemn it. Origen was one of the principal advocates of this opinion; and since then it has very generally prevailed throughout Christendom.

The ordinary notion respecting the soul's immortality is, that the soul or spirit of man (using the words interchangeably) is by its nature and essence indestructible; that God in the creation of Adam communicated this self-existent principle, and that it is impossible for the soul to decay or be destroyed; yea, some have even asserted that is impossible for God to destroy it.

We enquire first, From whence has this doctrine been derived? Is this doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures? If not, from what other source has it been obtained? and what is its value?

1. There is no subject upon which man is so entirely ignorant as he is respecting the nature and properties of life, whether that life be vegetable, animal, or spiritual. The symptoms and manifestations of life are familiar enough; but to grasp the principle of life itself, and divine its essence, are completely beyond the power of man. What is the nature of the human soul? Who can tell? The words “psuche,” translated “life” or “soul,” and “pneuma,” “breath” or “spirit,” used in Scripture when speaking of the spiritual part of man, do not convey any definite idea of the properties of that soul or spirit; and if we are in ignorance as to the properties of the soul, how

can we predicate its immortality? The body decays and dies, the mind becomes diseased and impaired; is it not therefore presumption on the part of man (unless it be a truth Divinely revealed) to affirm that the soul is immortal?

2. Does experience or observation supply us with any evidence that can at all guide us in the enquiry? Experience teaches us that the body is mortal, and capable of dissolution; but as to the soul it is only by Divine revelation that we learn that its existence does not terminate with the body. Unaided reason can give us no clue as to the ultimate condition of the spirit: the same authority that informs us of the soul's survivance at death, must alone be relied upon to supply us with correct information regarding its final issues.

3. Does Scripture affirm the natural immortality of the soul? Certainly not. If so, where? We know of no passage that can fairly be adduced to sustain this proposition. There are two or three passages frequently quoted for this purpose, but in our judgment they wholly fail to establish the doctrine.

(a.) "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness," etc. Gen. 1. 26. It is assumed here that to make man in the image of God is to make man immortal. The context does not support this conclusion: "And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea," etc. The idea suggested is that man as a ruler and governor over the earth should bear some resemblance to the Almighty Ruler of the universe. Again, the fact that God did create man in moral resemblance to Himself, His goodness, His purity, His truth, sufficiently meets the requirements of the text, and sustains the statement of the inspired writer, that man was made in God's "image."

(b.) Another passage often quoted is Gen. 2. 7. "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The phrase "breath of life" is thought to be very conclusive that God did communicate to man His own imperishable nature. Now this expression is evidently figurative, and is used in a great variety of senses in sacred Scripture. For instance: Job 4. 9, "By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of His nostrils they are consumed." Job 37. 10, "By the breath of God frost is given." Job 41.21, "His breath kindled coals, and a flame goes out of His mouth." Psalm 33. 6, "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth," and many others. There is nothing especial in the phrase "breath of God" to render it conclusive that the simple use of the term establishes the doctrine of the soul's immortality. Besides, this same expression is used, when speaking of the inferior animals, Gen. vii. 22. "All in whose nostrils was the breath of life, of all that was in the dry land, died." This passage places the advocates of natural immortality upon the horns of a dilemma: if "breath of life" denotes immortality, then the fowl, the cattle, the beast, the creeping things, are also immortal.

4. Another argument for natural immortality is drawn from the use of the adjectives "eternal," "everlasting." It is assumed that these words are expressive of unlimited duration; consequently, when connected with the destinies of man, the whole question is supposed to be settled. Now it is a fact that these words are sometimes used to express endless duration, but not always. A careful comparison of Scripture passages will show that so far from the word everlasting determining the period of time, it is itself determined by the subject with which it stands connected. Take the following cases. The feast of the Passover (as well also as all the ceremonies of the Mosaic economy) was appointed "as an ordinance to thee and to thy sons forever." Exodus 12. 24. The fire which destroyed the cities of the plain is called "eternal fire." Jude, 7. The palaces of Jerusalem, and the cities of Idumea were burnt up with "unquenchable fire." Jer. 17. 27; Isa. 34. 9, 10. In these cases (and many more might be cited) the duration of the period expressed by the words "forever," "eternal," "unquenchable," etc., is limited by the duration of the subject spoken of, and not the duration of the subject determined by the word "forever." Further, the singularity of the argument, in attempting to derive the doctrine of natural immortality from the use of the word "everlasting" is, that the doctrine must be proved from the future condition of the wicked, or not at all (the righteous obtaining their immortality directly from Christ), and the future condition of the wicked is invariably spoken of as "death," "destruction," "perished." 2 Thess. 1. 9, "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord." "The wages of sin is death." Rom. vi. 23. "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Luke 13. 3. Death is the extinction of life; everlasting death must be the everlasting extinction of life. How the everlasting destruction of the wicked can be a proof of the immortality of the soul, passes altogether the bounds of our comprehension!

5. The argument against the doctrine of natural immortality is positive as well as negative. The Scriptures plainly declare that there is no life but in Christ; that He has "brought life and immortality to light;" that He confers this inestimable gift upon those only who believe in Him.

Ponder the following passages: "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3. 16. "I give unto them (my sheep) eternal life; and they shall never perish." John 10. 28. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life." Rom. 2. 7. "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power." Rev. 20. 6. "Neither do they die anymore." Luke 20. 36. "I am the resurrection and the life." John 11. 25. "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5. 11. "Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2 Tim. 1. 10.

To ascribe to all men, irrespective of faith and spiritual regeneration, immortality, is to rob Christ of the brightest jewel in His crown.

On The Doctrine Of The Atonement.

THIS paper is not intended to discuss the general principles upon which the doctrine of atonement is based: it is assumed that its readers are agreed that as in human governments law is essential to order, and likewise of paramount importance that the authority and integrity of the law should be maintained; so, in the Divine government, to give immunity to transgressors, much more to show favor and confer honour upon the rebellious, would (in the nature of things) without some counteracting provision, be destructive of all authority, and bring the law into universal contempt. Upon this basis we propose to investigate the general theory of the doctrine of atonement as presented by theologians, and enquire how far it agrees or wherein it differs from the system laid down in the sacred Word.

The general statement of the question is somewhat as follows. Sin is an infinite evil, and worthy of infinite punishment. Adam, by his transgression, incurred for himself and his posterity the penalty of death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. The sacrifice and death of Christ covers only the sins of the elect, as held by some, others regard it as a propitiation for the sins of the whole world; and, lastly, the sufferings of Christ, either as it regards their intensity, or as it regards the dignity of the sufferer, present an equivalent for the accumulated sins of all those for whom He died.

The two main defects of this system are, first, that the nature of sin, and consequently of its punishment, are over-estimated, and, secondly, the theory of accumulation or aggregation is not that which is taught in the Scriptures.

1st. What is the nature of sin, and what its punishment? Is sin an infinite evil? In what sense can sin be called infinite? Is it infinite in duration? Not necessarily. God can destroy both sin and the sinner. Is it infinite in its essence? Can the actions of a finite being become infinite? Are good actions infinite as well as bad ones, possessing infinite merit? This conclusion is inadmissible; in fact all such reasoning is illogical and absurd. What saith the Scriptures? The apostle John says, "Sin. is the transgression of the law." God has given a law: sin is the violation of that law,—the commission of an act of rebellion against God, an insult to the Majesty of Heaven.

2nd. What is the punishment of sin? The infinite theory having broken down, the infinite punishment falls with it. Our only concern will be to ascertain what the Word of God says as to the penalty attached to disobedience. "The soul that sins, it shall die." "In the day that thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die;" or, as it is rendered in the margin, Dying thou shalt die. Divines say that the term death includes death temporal, death spiritual, and death eternal. Just so; but we are not asking what divines say, but What saith the Scripture? Spiritual death is never spoken of as a penalty attached to sin; in fact it constitutes the very essence of sin. The apostle James says, "When lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death;" alienation of heart, manifested by mistrust of God and lusting after the fruit of the tree, constituted the essence of Adam's sin, and was not therefore a result of the fall, it was the fall; much less was it a penalty.

Eternal death is the Divine infliction for the sin of unbelief upon those who willfully reject the proffered atonement; consequently it does not affect the question of the penalty attaching to Adam's sin, or the sin of those to whom such mercy has never been offered. We again repeat the question, What are we to understand by the term death, as threatened to our first parents? The explanation temporal death does not seem to meet the case; it surely means something more than that after a life of comparative enjoyment, as the case may be, the body shall return to dust and the spirit to God who gave it. How is the matter to be ascertained? By the simplest of all processes. It is affirmed by the Holy Scriptures that the penalty incurred by man has been borne by Christ (Gal. 3. 13), that on the principle of substitution the Lord Jesus has stood in man's place. Justice could not inflict more than was due, justice certainly would not be satisfied with less; consequently the death of Christ in all its features supplies us with a complete answer to the question, What was the nature of the death incurred by Adam and his posterity by original sin? Let us then endeavor to define the elements of the Savior's death.

- (a) It involved physical suffering of great intensity.
- (b) It was an ignominious death—association with thieves and murderers, and the opprobrium of intelligent beings.
- (c) A third element, though much less capable of definition, was the felt anger and displeasure of His Heavenly Father. "It pleased the Father to bruise him, He hath put him to grief." "My God! my God! why hast Thou forsaken me?"
- (d) A fourth was the yielding up of His life: "He gave his soul an offering for sin." "He died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."

All these were combined in the death of our blessed Lord, and doubtless would have been endured by Adam or any of his descendants had the original penalty been enforced upon them. It is true that the perfect holiness of Christ would intensify the sense of God's displeasure, in a manner wholly inappreciable by depraved man; still that does not constitute a difference in the penalty, but makes manifest the essential difference between Christ and man, of the spotless purity of Him who was willing to endure the penalty in man's stead. Admitting then that the mortality of our race is a consequence of Adam's sin, we yet contend that natural death as now experienced falls far short of that fearful sentence denounced by God in the garden—"Dying thou shalt die." Man is living under a dispensation of mercy, and not of judgment; his life is prolonged; he enjoys the blessing of God in ten thousand forms; and only if he prove unbelieving will he experience what God's curse is, and that in a more aggravated form than ever threatened in Eden. It is very

important therefore to distinguish between the penalty incurred by Adam, and the penalty incurred by the finally impenitent. The Saviour endured the first, but not the second; hence it is that there is no deliverance for those who ultimately reject the atonement. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more (no other) sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." Heb. 10. 26, 27.

The second principal defect in the usually received theory of the atonement is the notion of an accumulation or aggregation of suffering laid upon Christ, as an equivalent to the numbers to be redeemed. It is very natural, at first sight, that we should imagine that if say ten thousand persons are to be saved, the atonement should consist of an aggregation of suffering equivalent to the united punishment of the sins of those ten thousand; but this is not the view presented by the apostle Paul. The sins of men are traceable to one great disastrous cause, the fall of Adam; and the condemnation resting upon mankind is distinctly stated to be through that one act of our first parents; "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." As then many are made sinners by the one act of another, so many are made righteous by the one obedience of Christ. "By the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." It is one righteousness, not many righteous-nesses, one life offered, not many lives; one life offered once and not many times. "Once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." We do not multiply the obedience of Christ, which is equally essential to the justification of believers as is His death; why should we multiply the sufferings? The federal headship of Adam and the federal headship of Christ constitute the basis of the true theory of God's system of atonement.

One advantage of this exposition of the atonement is that there is no necessity to attempt an exaggeration of the sufferings of Christ, to which the Calvinists are so exceedingly prone. The sufferings of Christ were assuredly great; but to heap up those sufferings, as it were, to constitute an equivalent to the number of sins forgiven, or to attempt the same result by resting it upon the dignity of the sufferer, is to adopt a mistaken view of the Divine arrangements.

Another advantage derived from this view of the atonement is that it completely sets at rest the much vexed question, whether our Lord died only for the elect, or whether He died for the sins of the whole world. There are many passages of Scripture that clearly support the latter proposition; but now we obtain an intelligible apprehension of the principle of procedure. There are but two sources of condemnation possible to man,—condemnation through the sin of Adam, as expressed by the apostle, "we who were by nature children of wrath," and condemnation through his own sins; all of which sins may be summed up in one cardinal sin, the sin of unbelief. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." The first ground of condemnation is entirely removed from our race by the sacrifice of Christ. "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh (or bears) away the sin of the world." John 1. 29. From the second ground of condemnation there is no escape except by a hearty acceptance of the truth of the Gospel, thereby becoming a member of the body of Christ,—a participator in the federal headship of the Second Adam. The Gospel places all mankind in a similar position to that occupied by Adam in Eden; they stand or fall by their own act; life or death are the alternatives; eternal life or eternal death! O how solemn is the issue! May the writer and the reader both have an interest in that eternal life which came forth from the Father and was manifested unto us.

There is one other feature in the work of Christ, alas, too often forgotten, but which we must mention before we bring this paper to a close. The Lord Jesus Christ had the power not only to suffer and die, but also to live again. "I have power to lay down my life and I have power to take it again: this commandment have I received of my Father." A careful study of the 15th chapter of the 1st Corinthians will show that the resurrection of Christ lies at the very basis of the atonement, and that without the resurrection of the saints there is and can be no salvation. "If Christ be not raised then they also which have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." "Waiting for the adoption, to wit the redemption of the body." The current teaching of the day, of glorified spirits at the moment of death has no place in the sacred record. The saints will not be glorified till the second coming of the Lord, when this "vile body shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." "The Second Adam was made a quickening spirit." Death could not possibly hold Him, neither can it retain the souls or bodies of His people. The words of the Psalmist, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell" (hades), are equally true of the believer as of Christ. Christ died that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Christ is "the resurrection and the life." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

On The Nature Of Future Punishment.

THE question of future punishment divides itself into two parts; the nature of the punishment, and the time and circumstances connected with its infliction. The former has hitherto absorbed the public mind; nevertheless the latter question is of considerable importance, and contributes very materially to the elucidation of the other. In dealing with the matter we shall endeavor first to form a correct idea of the time and circumstances when God will deal in judgment with the ungodly.

We feel that in discussing this question we must ask the indulgence of those of our readers who do not hold the doctrine of the pre-millennial advent of Christ; and with a view to help such, if enquirers, we shall adduce one passage that appears to us clearly to establish that system of interpretation. We refer to the 15th chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, 13th to 17th verses. A meeting of the Church at Jerusalem, with its apostles and elders, had been convened, to determine the question of circumcision; Peter rehearsed his successes amongst the Gentiles, testifying of the miraculous powers conferred upon them, similar to the church at Jerusalem. The apostle James undertakes to show that what has happened, if not included in, is certainly not in contradiction to the prophecy of Amos (9. 11.), "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name." And it is after this (the words after this are not in the quotation from Amos but are supplied by James; the argument of the apostle is, therefore, that the restoration of the Jews, etc., takes place after this ingathering from among the Gentiles, or, as Paul expresses it, "when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in,") "after this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things."

This passage supplies us with a complete chronology of the order of events; first, the present evangelization of the Gentiles; after this, the second coming of Christ and the restoration and conversion of the Jews (Rom. 11. 26); and subsequent to this a second work among the Gentiles under the ministration of the Jews. "But ye shall be named the Priests of the Lord, men shall call you the Ministers of our God. Ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." Isa. 61. 6.

With regard to the times and circumstances of the manifestation of God's judgments upon the wicked, we have two distinct periods.

1. The judgment upon "the quick" (or living) at the second coming of Christ.
2. The judgment of the dead at the end of the millennium. This view is clearly deducible from 2 Tim. 4. 1. and Rev. 20. 5.

1. The judgment upon the quick, or living, at the second coming of our Lord. This truth is taught—

(a) In the parable of the sheep and goats, Matt. 25. 31. "When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations" (ethnos, Gentiles). The dead are never called nations or Gentiles.

(b) The parable of the tares in the field is of the same character. Matt. 13. 38. "The field is the world;.... the tares are the children of the wicked one, the harvest is the end of the age (aion)," not world, as rendered in our translation.

(c) Also the parable of the ten pounds is corroborative. Luke 19. "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return." Having received the kingdom, he returns, rewards the faithful servants, and commands the enemies to be slain before his face.

II. The execution of this judgment will occupy some considerable time.

(a) In the parable of the sheep and the goats, time is given for explanation, both on the part of the righteous and the wicked: so also in the tares in the field, the angels, who are the reapers, have to gather them in bundles from all parts of the world. Again, most of the parables indicate a period of fruitless effort to obtain admission when it is too late: "Lord, Lord, open to us." Luke says (21. 26), "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." The apostle John says that men will call upon "the rocks to fall upon them and hide them from the face of Him that sits upon the throne." And again, Rev. 9. 6. "And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it, and shall desire to die and death shall flee from them."

III. The wicked, as the result of this great assize, will be cast into hell, or Gehenna.

What are we to understand by Gehenna? There are two words in the Greek translated into the same English word hell, Hades and Gehenna. Hades is the grave, or place of spirits, Gehenna a place of punishment. The latter word is used twelve times in the New Testament, eleven of which are to be found in the Gospels. Are we then to accept the word in its literal signification, that is, "the valley of the son of Hinnom," or to give it some figurative or symbolical meaning? We will give the whole history of the matter, and the reader shall judge. Calmet, in his Dictionary of the Holy Bible, says, "Gehenna, or Ge-hennom, or valley of Hinnom, or valley of the son of Hinnom. See Josh. 15. 8., 2 Kings 23. 10. A valley adjacent to Jerusalem, through which the southern limits of the tribe of Benjamin passed. Eusebius says it lay east of Jerusalem, at the foot of its walls; but we are certain that it extended south, along the brook Kedron. It is thought to be the common sewer be-longing to Jerusalem, and that a fire was always burning there to consume the filth of the city." This valley bore also the name of Tophet (2 Kings 23. 10), and the valley of Jehoshaphat (Joel 3. 12).

This quotation from Calmet shall serve as the past history of Gehenna: we will now supply a few quotations from the Scriptures to present us with its future history; which quotations constitute overwhelming proof that this valley literally will be the place in which the wicked nations will meet their doom at the advent of Christ. Joel 3. 11. "Assemble yourselves and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O Lord. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about." Isaiah 30. 33. "For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king (Antichrist) it is prepared; he hath made it deep and large: the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it." Isaiah 66. 24. "And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." This last passage is interesting, as being the very one quoted by our Lord in Mark 9. 42, 45, 47, and affords a complete

interpretation to the latter. We have only to bear in mind that the audience were Jews, that they were well acquainted with the valley of Gehenna, and likewise of the predictions contained in the Prophets, and the meaning of the words is unmistakable.

2. The second period of judgment, and of the infliction of Divine wrath, is at the end of the Millennium. The rest of the dead are then raised (see Rev. 20. 5), and, together with the rebels of the Millennial age, are gathered around the great white throne for judgment; the books are opened, and all not found written in the Book of Life are cast into the lake of fire. This lake of fire is doubtless constituted by the molten condition of this terrestrial globe, as described in 2 Peter 3. 7. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men." "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

II. The second division of our subject is the nature of future punishment. Is it destructive—destructive of body and soul? or is it the retention of existence, under circumstances of endless torture?

It seems humiliating to our rational faculties that it should be necessary even to state such a proposition at all. The idea of eternal torment, to any one who has endeavored to realize what that means, is so utterly repugnant to every feeling of humanity, and so hopelessly irreconcilable with the character of God as revealed in Holy Scripture, both as it regards His justice and His infinite love, that but for the unscriptural dogma of natural immortality, it is quite certain that this hypothesis would never have been entertained. Given the doctrine of natural and inalienable immortality, and there are but two alternatives—the Augustinian theory of eternal torment, and the system of universal restoration advocated by Origen. Assuming that the question of natural immortality has been satisfactorily disposed of, we are free to discard both of the above unscriptural deductions.

The nature of the punishment inflicted upon the ungodly may readily be determined—

(a) By the fact that God, in His Holy Word, has declared, in language as plain as it is possible to use, that he will destroy—utterly destroy the wicked.

"The Lord knows the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish." Psalm 1. 6.

"The Lord preserves all them that love Him, but all the wicked will He destroy." Ps. 145. 20.

"The soul that sins, it shall die." Ezek. 18. 4.

"Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Luke 13. 3.

"But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed shall utterly perish in their own corruption." 2 Peter 2. 12.

"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord," 2 Thess. 1. 9.

God "is able to (will) destroy both soul and body in hell." (Genenna). Matt. 10. 28.

(b) The same fact is declared in figurative language, but equally plain.

The wicked are compared to "dead branches," "trees twice dead, plucked up by the roots," "stubble," "tares," "chaff;" the most inflammable and most easily destroyed of material things; and when it is considered that the fire that is to consume this chaff is unquenchable and everlasting, no stronger language could possibly be used to express complete and irrevocable destruction. If the terms unquenchable and everlasting present any difficulty, the reader has only to consult Jude 1. 7; Jer. 17. 27; Isaiah 34. 9; and the term "unquenchable fire" will be easily understood.

(c) The same conclusion is irresistible if full consideration be given to the antithesis employed in describing the respective destinies of the righteous and the wicked. "I give to my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish." Just as we contrast light and darkness, heat and cold, so eternal life and eternal death constitute the two opposite conditions of the righteous and the wicked respectively. If eternal life be a blessing conferred upon the righteous, then obviously the wicked do not possess it.

A word of explanation on one or two passages of Scripture must close this chapter. Matt. 25. 46. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." The words everlasting and eternal are the same, and it is argued that the punishment must be as everlasting as the life. Just so! But what is the punishment? "They shall be punished with everlasting destruction." 2 Thess. 1. 9. A destruction that is complete and final is assuredly an everlasting punishment. Another passage is the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Luke 16. 19. It is generally admitted that this is a parable, and yet, strange to say, it is invariably interpreted literally, as though the Lord gave a history of two individuals. The difficulties attending a literal interpretation are the following:-

1. This scene is laid in Hades, or the separate state, and we know that the uniform testimony of Scripture is that the righteous and the wicked do not receive their respective awards till after the resurrection.

2. The rich man is depicted as having a body in the separate state: he asks for "water to cool his tongue."

3. Lazarus is represented as finding a home in Abraham's bosom, whereas the believer's hopes centre in Christ.

4. The parable, if taken literally, teaches the doctrine of making prayers to a saint.

5. The difference of treatment of the rich man and Lazarus is not based upon differences of character, but upon the simple fact, that as in this life one enjoyed good things and the other evil, now this difference is reversed.

A better interpretation of the parable may be obtained by regarding it as a figurative representation of the respective spiritual conditions of the Jew and Gentile: many of the parables are of this character, and there is no reason why this should be an exception.

The rich man faring sumptuously every day, is a graphic description of Jewish privileges,—to whom pertained “the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.” Lazarus in his rags, sets forth the dog of a Gentile, without hope and without God in the world, yet joyfully craving the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table, see Mark 7. 26. The Jews, disbelieving Moses and the Prophets, though one rose from the dead, from being exalted to heaven by their privileges are now thrust down to Hades, and. the dog of a Gentile is found in Abraham's bosom: a child of Abraham through faith in Christ Jesus. The kingdom of heaven is taken from the Jews and given to another nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

There are other passages that claim our attention, but space forbids. May the Spirit of all Truth guide every earnest enquirer, and grant that what is contained in this pamphlet in accordance with His will, may be for the instruction of His people and for the glory of His holy Name.

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