

## On The Duration Of Evil,

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### Preface.

IN the following pages the first person plural is used; notwithstanding the air of arrogance which some ascribe to that form of expression. The writer knows that not a few Christians entertain opinions somewhat similar to his, though, of course, with many variations. He has therefore stated them plurally, as being in some measure the sentiments of a class, which he believes to be increasing. By himself they have been strongly held ever since he began to study seriously the Christian records. He has often heard, and extensively read, the arguments against them: never with acquiescence or assent, yet hitherto without any written attempt at refutation.

But to such an attempt some new reasons now induce him. One of these is the circumstance—noticed by several friends—that a layman of admired ability, in whose cordial respect for religion they truly rejoice, has stepped aside, when treating of other topics, to cast a weapon at these opinions. This is an added motive, though a minor one, for re-examining and endeavoring to defend them. Not that the present writer, and those who think with him, resent the charge of " feeble powers of reasoning; " conscious that this feebleness is in every case much greater, than self-confident minds, in their own case, imagine. But it is apprehended that the defense of "infinite evil" from such a quarter, may produce in some thoughtful persons new disaffection or prejudice towards Christianity; and may encourage in others the stronger assertion of a dogma, which it is believed neither Scripture sustains nor can reason vindicate.

There may be those who have renounced, or are prepared to renounce, this dogma of endless evil, but who yet will shrink from indulging the hope of any possible instance of "restoration" for the unsaved in this life; as deeming such a hope entirely unwarranted by Scripture. Although the writer here offers his reasons for believing that it is—on scriptural grounds—in some cases allowable, still this (his readers should be apprised) is not the leading topic or aim of the present Essay.

Its chief aim is negative; namely, to show that we are not obliged, as Christians, to believe the endlessness of evil, but rather are encouraged to expect the ultimate destruction of it, together with all in whom it shall continue to bear sway.

This main argument would be still complete, if Chapters 11, 18, 19, 20, and 21 (comprising about twenty-seven pages) were passed over or withdrawn.

Those chapters relate to the consolatory though dubious hope before referred to. But their omission would neither break the continuity of the chief argument, nor diminish its strength. If that hope be in other passages incidentally implied or adverted to, it can by such readers be easily laid out of view, as forming no part of the general negative conclusion—that evil will not be endless.

The writer has sought to avoid amplification, in order not to enlarge this little volume beyond what a careful inquiry appeared strictly to demand.

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### 1 On The Meaning Of The Word Infinite.

THE question cited in our preface—"Why not infinite good out of infinite evil?"—must be taken to imply—for it else can have no weight—that, in order to the production of infinite good, the existence of infinite evil is indispensable.

Before treating of that awful question, it is well to premise, that, in the sense there attached to the word infinite, —which is a very common use of it—infinities indefinitely differ in amount; for one might safely assume, what in fact is intimated by words preceding, that the infinite good is expected to be greater than the supposed infinite evil. The word, however, is not thus used in its stricter and proper sense. " Infinite space," writes Cudworth, " beyond the material world, hath been much talked of. —But, as we conceive, all that can be demonstrated here is no more than this; but, how vast soever the finite world should be, yet there is a possibility of more and more magnitude and body still to be added to it by divine power infinitely;—which potential infinity, or indefinite increasable of corporeal magnitude, seems to have been mistaken for an actual infinity of space."

Indeed the term Infinite, in its true and full meaning, appears applicable only to the Self-existent. Of Space, it may perhaps be said, as of God, that it is without beginning, without end, and without boundary. But then Space is at most a negative infinite. So that we may affirm with Cudworth, the true Infinity " is really nothing else but perfection. Infinite understanding is nothing else than perfect knowledge. Infinite power is nothing else but perfect power—a power of producing all whatsoever is possible. Lastly, infinity of duration or eternity is really nothing else but perfection, as including necessary existence and immutability in it. And because infinity is perfection, therefore can nothing which included anything of imperfection in the very idea and essence of it be ever truly and properly infinite. There is nothing truly infinite, neither in knowledge, nor in power, nor in duration, but only one absolutely perfect Being; or the Holy Trinity."\*

If of Space it may be affirmed that it is an endless extension every way, at least all so-called corporeal " infinities" can be only as endless lines of less or greater breadth. It is true, this language, as applied to spiritual beings and qualities, is figurative; as the notion of boundless space or all-comprehending extension is figurative when applied to illustrate the Divine Omnipresence; inasmuch as extension does not belong to spirit.

But the figure as used in the one case is analogous to that employed in the other. If God's presence and duration may be likened to illimitable space, so may a created spirit's being and duration to an endless line. Or we may say—as is God's infinitude to boundless space, so is a created spirit's existence (if He prolong it) to an unending line. These lines may be considered as more or less broad, more or less bright, or more or less attenuated, or dim, or dark, according to the excellency or obscurity, the goodness and happiness, or the evil and imperfection, of the minds which they represent.

But thus, the very phrase "infinite evil," and the proposition which has been often laid down, "sin is an infinite evil," appear to be in truth unmeaning or fallacious. It has been usual to disprove that proposition by arguing, as Whitby does: " If all sins be for this reason infinite as to demerit, then the demerit of all sins must necessarily be equal; etc. Hence it will follow that God cannot render unto every man according to his works, because though they commit innumerable sins, He can only lay upon them the punishment due to one only, because He cannot lay upon them a punishment which is more than infinite."\* But we apprehend there is another and further way of viewing the matter. Infinite, properly speaking, we have seen belongs only to God and his attributes; certainly therefore not to evil. Besides, to suppose a finite mind to have or originate something infinite seems a contradiction. It has been shown that by infinite, in its secondary sense, only endless is meant; but to say "sin is an endless evil," is only to assume or beg the question in debate. Moreover, if " infinite" really means perfect, and if, when unfitly applied to sin, it can only mean endless, then the argument that sin is an infinite evil may be put in other and correct words thus: God is perfect, whom sin immensely outrages and opposes, therefore sin shall do so unendingly; an argument which seems to carry its own refutation in the very terms of it.

## CHAPTER II.

### 2 On The Doctrine Of "Infinite Evil."

HE who believes, or imagines that he believes, the existence of "infinite evil," professes a belief that the Being of whom it is declared "none is good, save One, that is God"—of whom it is revealed that " God is Love"—either wills to make, or must make, of sin and suffering absolutely endless, in order thus to produce a larger amount of holiness and happiness which shall be alike endless.

"If," says Robert Hall, "the eternal misery"—that is, endless sin and suffering—"of a certain number, can be rendered conducive to a greater amount of good, in relation to the universe at large, than any other plan of action, then the attribute of goodness requires it." [Works, vol. v. p. 528] We have used the phrase, endless sin and suffering, because all (it is believed) who hold the doctrine, maintain that, where suffering shall be endless, sin will be equally so.

Dr. Witherspoon, a calm and thoughtful divine of this school, has the following statement: "What is damnation? It is to be for ever separated from God. It is to hate God and blaspheme his name, as well as be banished from his presence." [Essay on Regeneration, p. 269.] Saurin, in treating of the qualities of future punishment, states the fifth and last of these to be "increase of crime." And he asks, " Is not this the height of misery? to hate by necessity of nature the Perfect Being, the Sovereign Beauty, in a word, to hate God? O miserable state of the condemned! In it they utter as many blasphemies against God as the happy souls in heaven shout hallelujahs to his praise." [Sermons, vol. 3.p. 348. Robinson's translation.]

Turretin, an eminent Swiss divine, states, "The infinite demerit of sin, however, is punished by a penalty of infinite duration. And this the more justly, since as they never cease from sinning against God, so neither from being punished by God, and as the guilt of crime will ever remain, nor be cancelled by any expiation, nor any place be given for repentance, but those sinners will ever burn with insane hatred of the Judge, and curse Him amidst the flames, so the wrath of God, the most just avenger of wickedness, will abide on them eternally."

Archbishop Tillotson remarks, "It cannot well in reason be otherwise, but that a creature, which is extremely miserable, and withal desperate, and past all hopes of remedy and recovery out of that dismal state, should rage against the author of its torment, and do all the despite to Him that it can, and wish that He were not, though it be in vain to wish so." The " Newest Whole Duty of Man" declares, " The infinity of God makes infinite wrath the just demerit of sin. Those that shall lie for ever under his wrath, will be eternally sinning, and therefore must eternally suffer." And again, " The condemned suffer eternally, since they will sin eternally:—nor can their torments excuse their horrible sinning under them; for it is not the wrath of God, but their own wicked nature, that is the true cause of their sinning."\*—Pp. 143, 503.

A much more recent writer says, "Man is an immortal being. Always a solemn attribute, in certain connections it becomes terrible. Sin has no tendency to wear itself out, or to loosen its hold upon the mind. Therefore sin reigns. Therefore ' they cannot cease from sin.' Moreover, instead of a supposed tendency in evil to exhaust itself, it unfolds all the powers of a self-multiplication. We have simply to follow out these views of sin through the future duration of the sinful soul. There is nothing in this to limit such tendencies." [Hamilton, Rewards and Punishments, p. 245.] And again, he says of the lost, "Their will is singly sinful. Its most distant, its endless, bias may be foretold. Everlasting punishment had not been prepared but for that which would be, of its very choice, everlasting sin." [Ibid., p. 371.]

This author had stated previously, "The natural man's will is in Satan's fetters, hemmed in, within the circle of evil, and cannot move beyond it more than a dead man can raise himself out of his grave."—Page 66. This work is stated to be recommended by Mr. Hervey, author of " Meditations," etc. It is earnestly recommended, in the preface, to youth, and as a family book.

But this being so, then must each line of sin (if not of suffering) be not merely endless, but ever widening in breadth, and deepening in darkness; so that, after a lapse of countless ages of ages, the collective amount of sins of an individual spirit at that moment, shall immensely exceed the collective amount of sins of all the condemned, unitedly, in the earliest periods of their condemnation. For even if it be held that suffering shall not augment proportionally, it is not conceivable that the amount of sin itself should not augment by repetition and persistence.

We are aware that it has been attempted to obviate or alleviate the moral difficulty as to unending evil, by abstruse speculations concerning existence not in time, and the difference of such an existence from one of successiveness and unendingness. (See "Disquisitions of Soame Jenyns.") But, an existence of simultaneous wholeness is ascribable only to the Eternal, the Self-existent. Nor do we think that any mode of the being of creatures—not even of the bodiless and non extended—is conceivable, which does not involve either successiveness in time, or else something analogous or equivalent to successiveness, and to which the term endlessness might be applied; whatever terms unknown by us might be needful to describe the state more appropriately and fully. The attempt referred to succeeds rather in making the mode of future life appear inconceivable and unintelligible, than in really lessening the moral difficulty of which we treat.

That epoch therefore in an endless duration must, by the supposition, arrive, when the sin of any one condemned sufferer shall by mere addition, if not by heightened and multiplied intensity, transcend all the moral evil which subsists at this hour in our world; and still with the sure prospect of an incalculable never-ending increase. Nor, if misery do not increase in the same immense and dreadful ratio, could this difference, according to the hypothesis we are examining, be because that increase is not deserved. The difference (we suppose) must be, because suffering is passive, while sin is active; misery a result, but sin an act; and therefore misery cannot be, as sin must be, strictly cumulative from the whole past. But it suffices for our argument, that by the hypothesis, the sin of an individual spirit would be as a line for ever growing endless in length and immeasurable in breadth, advancing still into that awful infinitude; while the endless misery would be caused by the "everlasting sin" of creatures whose existence God willed to perpetuate.

The inference which we are constrained to draw, from such opinions and the consequences they involve, is pretty obvious: it is, that endless sin and misery are incredible. "This has, however," we are told, "the disadvantage of proving too much; being conclusive, if admitted, against the endless punishment of fallen spirits, not less than of fallen men. That the difference between their nature and ours may be immense, is admitted; it must, however, shrink into nothingness, if we compare either with the Divine." [Gray, Immortality, p. 65.] Now we own that we shall not think of our conclusion as "proving too much," if it can prove the final extinction of evil in all cases. We may know too little of the nature or state of fallen spirits not human, to argue on this. But should it at length be found, that the Son of man came not only "to destroy the works of the devil," but ultimately to destroy or to reclaim the Evil One himself with all his host, who would not devoutly exult in this triumph, as a glorious fulfilment of the word "He hath put all enemies under his feet." [1 Cor. 15.25; compare 2 Thess. 2.9, and Heb. 2.14.]

That divine, we think, must be what an old writer styles "heaven's privy counsellor," who can positively demonstrate (what is commonly assumed) that the devil and his angels must, in their revolt and depravity, necessarily exist and act, as long as the holy and ever-blessed God exists and acts.

### 3 On The Supposed Excess Of Good To Result From "Infinite Evil."

BY those who regard this as the scriptural and true doctrine, it is, we presume, without doubt held also, that the amount (in breadth or extensiveness, and in brightness or intensity, so to speak) of endless holiness and blessedness, shall immensely exceed the vast and endless sum of moral evil; and this as a result of that evil and of its incalculable boundless augmentations: a result which, without these in their full extent, could never have been attained.

All this we admit is conceivable; nor could it have been thought beforehand that any other supposition would be made, even as a possibility. We find, however, a most eminent writer expressing himself thus: "Thy glory would not be less, even if no one man received the fruit of the Savior's death. Thou couldst have caused him to be born for a single predestined soul: a single one would have sufficed, if Thou had willed but one: for Thou does all to accomplish thy wholly gratuitous will, which has no other rule than itself." \* Bit with regard to the first and incomparably happier supposition, where are the phenomena in nature, or the assurances in Scripture—after granting the doctrine of never-ending ever-accumulating moral evil—which can certify or fully persuade us of this? As to the actual state of our own race, facts point to a different conclusion.

There is ground to believe that the amount of rejection  
\* Fenelon, *cEuvres Spirituelles*, tom. 1.p. 38.

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and neglect of spiritual good, of moral perversion or utter ignorance, and of unfitness for real happiness, very far exceeds that of love to truth and goodness, and preparedness for a heavenly state. Nor is it quite clear (unless certain texts be taken in a sense which our opponents condemn) that any such new condition of our race, as a whole, is predicted or promised, as would entirely change the preponderance into that of spiritual good and blessedness.

But even were this clear, it could neither annul the present nor the past preponderance of spiritual evil, nor their unending results.

It is granted that a considerable argument may be raised in extenuation or abatement of the great difficulty we are discussing, if we may expect a Millennium for our race, in which all will attain moral renovation and spiritual preparedness for felicity: assuming further that this earth, by some divine bounty miraculously profuse, shall be fitted to support such an immensely augmented population. For if the aggregate of mankind then go on to be doubled and redoubled only in each half century, the progression in those ten centuries would be vast beyond all the conception of any who have not computed it.

We shall find, in the twenty reduplications of the thousand years, the number of our population multiplied 524,000 times and upward, so that the result would be about 500 billions. This doubtless is a cheering and wonderful thought, reminding us of what the Creator, Savior, and Sanctifier of man may do, even without any suspension of physical laws. Such an ordination would divinely alter the proportion of moral evil and misery to that of good and happiness in this world. But still, happily as it would change the relative or comparative aspect of God's ways and doings, it yet would not alter, actually and absolutely, either the past or the present. It

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would not annul the fact, that unnumbered spirits have passed through this life without attaining holiness, and that therefore—on the "orthodox" scheme—there is to be a never-ending addition of sin and suffering, as it respects each one of that uncounted multitude.

But Reason also teaches that other beings or races are in all probability fallible; and Scripture affirms that some others have desperately fallen.

What certainty then have we, on the above hypothesis of "infinite evil," that evil will not be as "infinite," as vast and increasing, in the created universe, as good—or even more so? Will it be said, that the perfections of God exclude this supposition? We reply, when it is held unwarrantable to question that the perfections of God necessitate or admit an absolutely unending augmentation of evil, the objector is palpably not warranted in himself deciding what relative proportions of created good and evil are or are not consistent with those same perfections.

If he does not say with Fenelon, "a single one made happy would have sufficed, if Thou had willed but one," it behoves him at least to say, the Untreated all-comprehending Good is the true Infinite; and all evil as well as good in creatures, which God permits by upholding their being, is consistent with that really infinite Good, whatever may be the relative proportions. But, if this satisfy the objector, it must not be expected to satisfy us. For if we suppose an excess or even an equal sum of moral evil and unhappiness in creatures, then the Perfect Being upholds the existence of those whose sin and misery will result in only a minor or equal sum of good. The author before quoted writes, concerning the Deity, "As all which exists, exists only by the communication of his Infinite being, as all which has intellect has it only by an efflux of his sovereign reason, and all which acts acts only by the impression of his supreme activity, it is He who does all in all; it is He who in each moment of our life is the pulsation of our heart, the movement of our limbs, the light of our eyes, the understanding of our mind, the soul of our soul: all that is in us—life, action, thought, will—is by the impression of this Power and Life; of this eternal thought and will.—Attention costs Thee no pain. If Thou should cease to have it, all would perish; there would be no longer any creature which could will, or think, or subsist. Wherever God is He does all, and as He is everywhere, He does all things in all places. He effects a perpetual creation, unceasingly renewed for all bodies: no less does He create at each instant all free and intelligent creatures."\*

This is incontrovertible. Therefore, on the supposition of never-ending evil, the infinitely good and holy Being entirely sustains the endless existence of growingly sinful creatures, whose criminal and miserable course the mere suspension of his will and energy to uphold them would at any instant terminate.

### 4 On The Atheistic Tendency Of The Doctrine Of "Infinite Evil."

THE notion that the human spirit is in itself indestructible, has been sometimes hazarded, apparently in order to obviate the conclusion that the endlessness of evil depends on God's will. But that fact, if proved, would at once elevate the creature into independency, and constitute it in this respect a God. It could then no longer be said of the Supreme, He "only hath immortality." Thus to suppose creatures who must necessarily go on to exist, "nor borrow leave to be," is a direct limitation of Omnipotence, and in truth, a sort of atheism.

But even apart from this, the unperceived tendency and issue of the doctrine of "infinite evil" appears to us atheistic, even when held by those whose creed and purpose are just the contrary.

For, let it be examined, to what their hypothesis really leads. It is with them a first principle that God is infinitely good or holy; nay, that God is Love. It is also held that God wills or permits moral evil to be endless, by upholding endlessly the existence of those creatures who will never be freed from it, and without whose being it would not be. It is argued, this must take place, cannot but be ordained or permitted, if the highest good and happiness are to be secured to others. In order that some creatures may become and ever continue like God in holiness and bliss, others must subsist without end in sin and misery. This course of argument is naturally chosen by the devout, because it would appear still less consistent with piety and reverence, to limit God's infinite goodness, than to circumscribe the divine power; more impious to say that God prefers to permit the endlessness and boundless augmentation of sin and its results, than to say that God cannot but permit this, if endless and transcendent good is to be secured.

Nor can we discern any medium between these alternatives.

If there be more than one possible method of producing endless good, and God chooses to produce it by the method of permitting endless evil, then He chooses to permit endless evil. If that be the only possible method, then it must necessarily be taken, and the divine power is restricted to it. But to suppose a restriction or defect of the divine power in any instance which does not involve a sin or a contradiction, is a tenet fundamentally atheistic. In whatever point or attribute we limit or reduce divine perfection, we are virtually striking at the very idea of God—that of a Being every way infinite, every way perfect.

Further, somewhat more than a mere limitation, either of goodness or of power, seems to us involved in the supposition under discussion. For if a perfectly holy man or holy angel were supposed able and willing to perpetuate the being of sinful and suffering creatures, for the purpose of maintaining or enhancing by this mean the holiness and happiness of others, then we perceive not why he might not also "do evil that good might come;" for we cannot clearly discriminate between willingly or necessarily perpetuating evil, and willingly or necessarily doing it. And if this be true of any created moral being, we see not why, on the supposition we are combating, the same should not be possible in regard to the Supreme.

But from supposing such a possibility we of course shrink with entire aversion. For, besides implying defect of either goodness or power, there would be involved in the even possible commission or direct causation of evil, a direct denial of indefectible holiness. Apart, however, from this impious thought, the hypothesis which makes the endless existence of sinners and sufferers to be either the matter of God's choice, or else to be a fact independent of Him, superior to the control of his will or power in bringing about the purposes of his holiness and mercy, does, to say the least, most perilously involve a circumscription of divine Omnipotence, or of perfect Goodness.

We dare not believe—since for us it would be a sort of blasphemy to believe—that He who is alone perfectly good, chooses that evil shall be never-ending. Neither dare we believe that He "with whom all things are possible" cannot prevent evil from being endless, without being thus disabled or precluded from effecting everlasting good. Of the two, the latter might seem the less irreverent and presumptuous, but for us it would still, in no small measure, have that character.

#### 5 On The Objection That The Existence Of Evil May Also Be The Ground Of Atheistic Argument.

IT may be alleged by Christians, who, with reverential submission to what they deem revealed truth, adhere to the doctrine of endless evil, that the prospect of even terminable evil and suffering extended to a great multitude and succession of beings, is as truly, if not as greatly, at variance with our weak and fallible notions of the divine attributes, as that endlessly cumulative evil which we cannot reconcile with them.

Some sceptics, on the other hand, will go much farther; and say, your reasonings have their true basis and legitimate issue in the old argument of Epicurus, from the existence of evil; namely, either that God was willing and not able, or that He was able and not willing, or that He was neither able nor willing;\* which argument, ironically inverted and vulgarized, with an obviously atheistic aim, was heretofore printed on cards, by the late Richard Carlisle, and exhibited in Fleet Street; to this effect—that there could not be any real evils between that street and Whitechapel; for if there were or had been any, it was incredible that the Almighty, All-wise, and All-good, either could not or would not have prevented or removed them. But we who cannot receive the doctrine of "infinite evil," are in reality no way driven to any such conclusion. It is true the immense difference between unending evil and evil which shall have a termination, especially when the latter is or will be exceedingly great, has been by some minds habitually overlooked, and therefore not much accounted of. But this oversight is, on the part of Christians, if not quite unjust, altogether inconsiderate; and in the sceptic, who probably denies the prospect of future retribution at all, it is yet more unreasonable.

For let the case be stated: the sins and sufferings of millions, who through millions of successive ages shall sin and suffer, but whose being shall terminate, do not constitute the smallest imaginable fraction of that sin and suffering which should be absolutely endless. One creature whose guilt and misery should never end, would, at some assignable point of his existence to come, have sinned and suffered a million times more than all those millions collectively, through all the periods of their terminable being; and would yet have to sin and suffer endlessly and incalculably more. Such is the plain and true, though overwhelming and never to be completed estimate, of what a belief in "infinite evil" really involves and imports.

We have only therefore to say to the objectors, whether Christian or skeptical, the difference which you appear not to discern is but a difference beyond all bounds, beyond all possibility of computation, immeasurable evermore. Let no one then argue that interminable and ever-increasing evil under the government of the ever-blessed God is credible, because it is certain that evil exists, or even is and will be through an indefinite period greatly prevalent; for, we repeat, these facts or statements differ immensely, incalculably, and beyond all our conceptions. What greater difference can be claimed in- proof of the nullity of such objections?

No illustration from human and temporal affairs can be in any degree adequate to represent such a difference; since in such affairs there is nothing unending. But let it be supposed that the autocrat of a great nation were known to be the most just, wise, and benevolent of sovereigns, and that a decree was published as from him, in a foreign language, which was by many interpreted to mean, —all offenders shall be made galley slaves till extreme old age, and then be broken on the wheel.

If we cannot put faith in this interpretation, are we to be told it thence follows, that we must not believe so good a ruler can ever ordain imprisonment or exile, or indeed any punishment at all?

#### 6 On The Plea For "Infinite Evil" Drawn From The Truth That God Is Not Its Author.

NEITHER can the force of our great difficulty be evaded, by insisting on what we acknowledge to be a sacred truth—namely, that God is not the Author of evil: as if, for this reason, while the existence of sinners must entirely and for ever hang on his upholding will, still would the endless perpetuity of sin be nevertheless entirely independent of Him.

We have indeed seen it affirmed, in a theological work which some highly value, that "no creature is contrary to God, or hateful or grievous unto Him, in so far as it is, lives, knows, hath power to do or to produce aught, and so forth; for all this is not contrary to God. That an evil spirit, or a man, is, lives, and the like, is altogether good and of God; for God is the being of all that are—all things have their being more truly in Him than in themselves; and also all their powers, life, knowledge, and the rest: for if it were not so, God would not be all good. And thus all creatures are good."

This doctrine, to which that of Fenelon above cited bears some resemblance, would seem to imply, that even if all higher intelligences and all humankind were to be endlessly condemned and sinful, still not only would the goodness of God be unimpeachable, but even the goodness of those creatures, in as far as they merely existed, and possessed the powers which God conferred and upheld, would be undiminished. It implies also that moral evil is so independent of God, that it can be perpetuated without his permission or beyond his dominion. Thus it resembles the ancient Parsic dualism, which "limited God's almighty power, by supposing an absolute evil, an independent ground of it beyond the divine control, involving itself in the contradiction of supposing an independent existence out of God."\* Although this doctrine is not in the same sense atheistic as that of some ancient philosophers virtually was, when they ascribed to evil a past eternal self-existence, it is more dreadful in attributing to it an everlasting future increase. For the Persian Magi predicted a period when the evil principle "Arimanius, should be-utterly destroyed," and "Hades utterly abolished."

#### 7 On The Objection That The Preceding Arguments Are Not Built On Scripture.

IT is a common and specious fallacy to allege, that such reasonings as have here been offered rest only on philosophic grounds, and not on the basis of truth revealed.

So far from it, in our first reference to the divine attributes, we have expressly appealed to scriptural declarations of them; nor are we, it may be, less versed in the letter of Scripture, nor less imbued with reverence for its Author and its spirit, than some who differ from us. We quite accede also to the remark of Professor Stuart, that "the Bible is the only sure source of knowledge, in regard to the future destiny of our race." But the learned writer goes on to ask, "How is this question to be settled by the Bible? Is it to be done by carrying along with us, when we go to interpret the Bible, principles which decide beforehand what in our view the Bible ought to speak, and to draw from these, conclusions as to what it does speak?" To this we answer, we have carried with us only those principles which the Bible itself contains, and presents as the very foundations of truth, and we contend that these must influence any sound interpretation.

The strictures of some highly esteemed divines on this general subject will not bear the test of inquiry. Dr. Chalmers writes, " Instead of learning the designs and character of the Almighty from his own mouth, we sit in judgment upon them, and make our conjecture of what they should be, take the precedency of his revelation of what they are." He subjoins, " Let the principle of what thinks thou' be exploded, and that of what reads thou' be substituted in its place. Let us take our-lesson as the Almighty places it before us."

He complains also that, "In the case of the Bible, the meaning of its author, instead of being made singly and entirely a question of grammar, has been made a question of metaphysics or a question of sentiment." And, again, "That the authority of the Bible is often modified, and in some cases superseded, by the authority of other principles. One of these principles is the reason of the thing." In these remonstrances there is some important truth, mingled, if we mistake not, with incautious and erroneous views. It is certain, and is sincerely lamented by us, that the liberty of d priori reasoning and that of free and rational interpretation have been very often abused; and that when men proudly and rashly sit in judgment on the attributes and ways of God, or when, in the same temper, they professedly interpret, but really "wrest, the Scriptures," there will ensue the gravest errors; such as a denial of Christ's Divinity and Sacrifice, or of the reality of miracles, and other fundamental truths.

Still we think it will be found, on examination, that some of the above-cited rules for interpreting Scripture can in no way be rationally sustained. Meanwhile, those of another eminent writer, in reference to figurative or analogical passages, seem to us to demand a wider or more various application than he himself designed to give them. "It is our duty," writes Dr. J. P. Smith, "to understand all such passages, in modes which shall be worthy of the dignity of God; and so to interpret them as to deprive the contemners of revelation of a pretext for censuring and rejecting it. If you do indeed resolve to take up the figurative language of Scripture as if it were literally true, look well to yourself. Think what consequences you are plunging into; what conceptions of the Infinite Majesty you are cherishing in your mind, and propagating around you; what effects they are likely to have upon other persons—yes, your own children—especially in the well-educated and inquiring classes of society; and what vantage-ground you are surrendering to the impugnors of the Bible, thus giving your aid for undermining the faith of probably the dearest to you.

It is observable that this comment and admonition are not on a passage which is, in the ordinary sense, figurative, though, like many others, it is to be viewed as analogical. The rule laid down therefore has certainly, if it be correct at all, a large and diverse application.

#### 8 On The Rule Of Literal Interpretation As Applied To Precepts.

THE rule above cited is again expressed in these terms by the same writer: " The mind and meaning of the author who is translated is purely a question of language, and should be decided upon no other principles than those of grammar or philology." He complains that, instead of this, the argument has been, " such must be the rendering, from the analogy of the faith, the reason of the thing, the character of the divine mind, and the wisdom of all his dispensations."

Now it is very obvious that the rule above urged, so far as it is valid, must be applicable broadly: must be, in fact, offered as a canon for the interpretation of Scripture universally.

We have seen, however, if there be any force in the remarks cited at the close of the last chapter, that there are occasions when it must be modified or limited; and probably every thinking Christian's recollection has suggested others.

But it is desirable to adduce particular passages of Scripture, and test the rule by an application to them.

Now if we may anywhere expect plainness and literality, and if anywhere it be unsafe to use too much latitude of interpretation, it would seem to be nowhere more than in the preceptive parts of Holy Writ. Here it is that clearness of meaning appears most indispensable; here, also, that we are under the strongest temptation to put an evasive gloss upon the record. And doubtless this often is done.

But let us turn to the view taken of many New Testament precepts, not by the lax or heterodox, but by the most devout and strict expositors; and how far do we find even their exegetical rule and practice to be founded on the strict principle of " what reads thou," or on the mere question of " grammar and philology."

Thus when our divine Teacher and Judge has solemnly enjoined, " If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee," and, " if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off and cast it from thee," there have been doubtless those who understood this literally, and more than literally; for Origen's self-mutilation found in the ancient church " many imitators, insomuch that canons were expressly framed in condemnation of that practice." This, however (as Dr. Tholuck observes), on the principle of adopting "the proper sense," would be perfectly justified." " In like manner would the slanderer be bound to tear out his tongue, and he who felt tempted by improper talk, to destroy the sense of hearing. The very object of these acts would, however, not be attained, for desire has its seat in the heart. There can consequently exist no case in which, for the subjugation of desire, the destruction of any member would be obligatory."\* No one, we apprehend, will dispute this conclusion; yet on what principle does it rest, but on " the reason of the thing?" Only one more instance shall be offered of the preceptive kind.

In Luke's Gospel (6.30) we read the commands of Christ, "Give to everyone that asked thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again." It may be worth remarking, to what a strange escape the Christian father Jerome was induced, who, in order to justify giving to every one, and in all circumstances, restricts the matter of the gift to the spiritual gift of salvation." But Tholuck, viewing it of course as referring chiefly to temporal matters, observes, " Would I conform absolutely to the precept ' give to every one that asked thee,' I must give the knife to the child, and poison to the man who intends to commit suicide." And Olshausen asks, " What could be more wanting in love than the literal practice of this precept? It would be an encouragement of begging reprobates." Augustine had shown long before, "that these precepts relate rather to the inward preparation of the heart than to the outward act, that so patience and benevolence may possess the soul, and that may be done openly which appears capable of profiting others." Calvin says on these passages, "we must look to the design of Christ." And Tholuck to the same effect: "we must understand them with the restriction borrowed from the analogy of faith." Now what are all these judgments, of divines who certainly cannot be accused of neological views, but a subordinating the " question of grammar" to the "reason of the thing;" an attention, most fitly, to what the text " ought to speak," in determining the sense of a passage; or at least a deciding what it " does speak," on far other grounds than those of "grammar and philology."

#### 9 On The Same Rule As Applied To Scriptural Declarations.

IT will perhaps be said, all this is fit or necessary as it respects certain precepts; but the class of scriptural declarations, to which reference must be had in determining the question before us, is entirely dissimilar to the preceptive parts of Scripture.

We reply, it is just because these classes of texts are dissimilar, that we examine both, for the sake of diverse proof and illustration of the principles to be vindicated—vindicated in their just and cautious use. Let us therefore notice a few of the New Testament declarations.

Our Lord, addressing the Jews, declares (John 8.51), " Verily, verily I say unto you, if anyone keep my word, he shall never see death." "It is certain," observes Dr. Campbell, "that he was understood by his hearers as speaking of natural death." This is evident from their answer, " Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and thou sayest, if a man keep my saying, he shall never taste of death." For that these Jews were not Sadducees, appears by their affirming that Christ was possessed by an evil spirit. They believed therefore that Abraham and the prophets were living as spirits; but that could be no argument against Christ's declaration, if they had taken his words to mean, "he shall not suffer eternal death;" which undoubtedly was their real, though not literal sense.

It was on this passage and the similar one (John 11.26), " Every one that is living and believes in me shall never die," that the acute Asgill founded his paradox that no Christian exercising strong faith would need to die, but might be translated without seeing or tasting death. We may notice also that the grammatical form in both those texts is the same as in John 4.14: "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." The Samaritan's answer proves that she took this literally. A Christian traveler in the great desert who should do the same, and carry no water accordingly, would but treat the meaning as " simply and entirely a question of grammar."

Another declaration of Christ, that to the Jewish ruler, "none is good save one, that is God,"—seems to have been interpreted by a pious divine of the Church of England somewhat on the same principle; for he says, " Charity does not oblige us to think any man good; because Christ says, a there is none good." But even if our Lord had not also spoken of "a good man's bringing forth good things," and, if Joseph and Barnabas had not been each described as " a good man," our own experience of Christian goodness, and thus the very "reason of the thing," would have yet demanded of us only to understand the declaration in a very modified sense; namely, that no being save God is originally, essentially, and independently good.

In like manner the express declarations of our Lord (Matt. xix. 26, Mark 10.27), "With God all things are possible," and the previous announcement of the angel (Luke 1.37), "With God nothing shall be impossible," would be limited by reason and conscience, enlightened as they are by the whole spirit of the Scriptures, even if we did not possess the text which assures or reminds us that " it is impossible for God to lie." We should still be sure that to devise or do evil is not a thing possible with God; and also that it is not possible with God to effect absolute contradictions, as that twice two should not be four, or that the whole should not be greater than a part, or that the same thing should at once be, and not be.

We will only glance, in concluding these instances, at the well-known declarations of our Savior (Matt. 26.26-28, and Mark 14.22-24), " This is my body, this my blood;" and (John 6.53), " Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." It is an undisputed fact, that millions in



Christendom take these words literally, and anathematize those who cannot. When Protestants decline so to take them, they disclaim, as Romanists themselves do in very many other passages, that merely grammatical interpretation which is manifestly untenable.

This review of Scripture instances has been made in disproof of a canon of interpretation, which, when applied in a general manner, would often lead to error. It will no doubt have some bearing on the further investigation of our subject. Yet what may perhaps be suspected does not at all follow, that we are about to discard "grammar and philology" in respect to the passages which in this controversy are usually adduced. On the contrary, while we claim to assign to them only their due place and weight among the principles by which a just interpretation should be guided, it will be presently evident that we do not wish to elude, or to treat them with neglect.

#### 10 On The Texts By Which The Doctrine Of Endless Sin And Suffering Is Commonly Held To Be Established.

THIS chapter will be chiefly occupied in the citation of such texts; without any comment here on the meaning and force of the expressions employed.

Matt. 18.8: "It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."

Matt. 25.41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil, and his angels."

Mark 3.29: "He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of everlasting condemnation."

Mark 9. 43, 44, repeated at verses 45, 46, and at verses 47, 48: "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed—or halt into life—or into the kingdom of God one-eyed, than—to go into hell—to be cast into hell—to be cast into hell fire, into the unquenchable fire, where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched."

2 Peter 2.17: "These are... clouds driven by a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever."

Jude 1.6: "Angels... reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day."

Jude 1.13: "Wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever."

Revel. 14.9-11: "If any one worship the beast... he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb; and the smoke of their torment ascended up for ever and ever."

Revel. 19. 3: "And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke" (that of the great harlot) "rises up for ever and ever."

Revel. 20.10: "And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."

Matt. 25.46: "These shall go away into punishment everlasting, but the righteous into life everlasting."

These texts, especially as thus brought together from their dispersion through the various writings of the New Testament, and viewed in their collective impression, form doubtless an awful array of threatening, adapted to awaken a salutary dread of God's tremendous judgments.

It is probable also that many readers will contrast them with the passages cited in the eighth and ninth chapters, imagining that in two essential respects the cases differ; namely, that in those precepts and declarations the necessity of limiting or modifying the sense was entirely obvious, and moreover that it was sanctioned or even dictated by other passages of the same book, whereas neither of those reasons, as they believe, can be maintained with respect to these scriptural statements; from which they judge that a belief in endless sin and suffering is necessarily deduced.

We think that, for candid minds, a further examination of Scripture may considerably alter those views.

Let it be granted, at present and for argument's sake, that we are to treat the matter altogether literally, and that the true grammatical import of the last-cited texts is that which believers in "infinite evil" affirm; subject only to the qualification which other texts in the New Testament, of an opposite or materially different grammatical import, may compel.

It appears to us that, by this rule of interpretation, they must be modified or limited; inasmuch as we shall find, in the ensuing chapter, a variety of others, which taken, in like manner, in their merely grammatical sense, seem evidently to teach a different doctrine: a doctrine also which we cannot embrace or vindicate, on account of that reciprocal modification of it which the preceding texts and other Scriptures impose.

#### 11 On The Texts By Which The Doctrine Of "Universal Restoration" Is Thought To Be Supported.

THE principal passages alleged in support of that doctrine are as follows. If a part of them shall appear to some readers not to bear, even when taken quite literally, the construction here assumed (which, from the force of habit and association, is not unlikely), this we think will not be the case with respect to the greater number. Not, at least, if the reader endeavors to weigh them as if read for the first time, and apart from any explications which the mind has been used to attach to them.

Our Savior declares to Nicodemus (John 3.17), "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

His forerunner had before proclaimed him (John 1.29) as "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." The Messiah was understood by the Samaritans, as we learn from John 4. 42, to be "the Savior of the world" with which phrase we may compare 1 John 4. 14, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son, Savior of the world."

Our Lord declared to his disciples, (John 12.32), "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto me."

The apostle Paul has written (Romans 5. 15 and 18, 19), "If through the offence of one the many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by the one man Jesus Christ, hath abounded to the many. Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall the many be made righteous."

The same apostle, treating of the end of Christ's mediatorial kingdom, writes (1 Cor. 15.28), "When all things are subjected to him" (i.e. to Christ), "then shall the Son also be subjected to Him who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all." To the Ephesians Paul wrote (1.10), "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in the heavens, and which are on earth; even in Him."

So he declared to the church at Philippi (2. 9, 10), "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 the heavenly and the earthly and the subterranean, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

Thus to the Colossians (1. 19, 20), "For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and, having, made peace through the blood of his cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself; by Him, whether things on the earth or things in the heavens."

To Timothy the same apostle wrote (2. 4-6), "This is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who willed all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth;" adding (verse 6), Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all; to be testified in the destined times." And again (1 Tim. 4. 10), "We trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of the believing."

So in the Epistle to Titus (2. 11), "For the grace of God, salutary or saving to all men, hath appeared."

In the writings of St. John, we read (1 John 2.2), "And he" (Christ) "is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world;" with which we may compare Paul's words to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5. 19), "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."

Lastly, in John's Apocalypse, we find this remarkable passage (Revel. 5. 13), "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 sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."

Now we think it undeniable by impartial reasoners, that, if this series of texts were interpreted literally—i.e. taken as they naturally would be if no other passages relating to the destinies and issues of human beings and affairs were found in Scripture—they would obviously intimate the doctrine of an ultimate "universal restoration."

If, then, the class of texts previously cited, and any other of like import or tendency, ought to qualify these latter, and would be rightly adduced to assist in interpreting them, then, on every principle of equity or parity of reasoning, these latter should no less be required to aid in the interpretation of the former; so far at least as to preclude a positive decision that the New Testament pronounces sin and misery to be never-ending.

If the texts which are cited in this chapter cannot, when judged by other scriptures, and by the analogy of" faith, avail to prove—what, if taken literally, we think they would prove—the doctrine that " universalists" contend for, they may yet suffice to show with very high probability that Evil shall terminate; that all rebellion and all rebels shall be ultimately destroyed; that whatever is to remain and subsist immortally, shall be "subjected to Christ," " reconciled to God;" " shall be " gathered together in one," and shall unanimously ascribe " blessing, and honor, and glory, and power to, Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

Further, if we impartially compare this series of texts with the former, in point of numerousness, weight, plainness, and diverseness of scriptural sources, it is thought no fair disputant will deny that the strength of these towards modifying the interpretation of the others, is, to say the least, equal, if not superior, to that of the former towards restricting the import of these.

If scriptures more numerous, more diverse in expression, more various as to the writings whence adduced, would support, taken literally, the doctrine of universal restoration, these, as we judge, must have proportionately more weight towards guiding our interpretation of the passages which are held to affirm "infinite evil,' than those can have towards determining the sense of the texts which this chapter offers.

It will scarcely be disputed that such comparison and reciprocal influence of texts apparently disagreeing, is one legitimate and important resource towards ascertaining the true sense of Scripture.\*

\* It may, however, be well to cite the rules laid down by orthodox expositors. " The most comprehensive rule of interpretation yet remains. Compare Scripture with Scripture, things spiritual with spiritual' (1 Cor. 2.13). It is by the observance of this rule alone that we become sure of the true meaning of particular passages; and, above all, it is by this rule alone that we ascertain the doctrine of Scripture on questions of faith and practice. A Scripture truth is really the consistent explanation of all that Scripture teaches in reference to the question examined."—See also Horne on the Study of the Scriptures, vol. 2.pp. 526, 527, 3rd edition.

## 12 On The Texts Which Appear To Teach The Ultimate "Destruction" Of The Wicked.

IT will be found that this third class of passages bears strongly on the interpretation of all which relate to our subject, and ought, as we judge, to modify that of both the classes above collected.

It consists of texts which declare the future doom of the impenitent, either by the name "death," or by other phrases which may be rightly construed to convey that meaning. The first of these we offer from—

Matt. 10.28: " Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

Here the same words, in the two clauses respectively, are applied to the soul and the body—in the first " to kill," in the second " to destroy." The former, while declaring that men are "not able to kill the soul," seems to imply, what no real theist can dare to question, that God is able to do so.

As to the latter clause, it would be strange to conclude, that while to "destroy" the body means to kill, to "destroy" the soul means endlessly to perpetuate life.

That the word literally means kill or "destroy," appears from the same Gospel (Matt. 2.13.): "Herod will seek the young child to destroy him." Matt. 21. 40, 41: "The lord of the vineyard will destroy those wicked " husbandmen.

Matt. 22. 7: " The king, sending his armies, destroyed those murderers." Matt. 26. 52: "They that take the sword shall perish — or be destroyed by the sword." \*

We find also in another Gospel, that the words to be destroyed and to die, are convertible; since we read (John 11.50), that Caiaphas declared it "expedient that one man should die for the people;" and in John 18.14, his saying is thus referred to, "that it was expedient that one man should die, or be destroyed for the people."

The noun derived from this latter verb occurs Matt. 7.13: "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction."

The same word is employed in Acts 25. 16. " It is not the custom of the Romans to give up any man to die, or to destruction," etc. So in the Septuagint version of the Apocrypha (Bel and the Dragon, verse 42): " He drew out Daniel, and cast those that were the cause of his destruction into the den;" where the word evidently means the punishment of death to which Daniel had been consigned. And in Acts v., after Gamaliel's relating that Theudas was "slain", he adds (verse 37), concerning Judas the Galilean, "he also perished." See also 1 Cor. 10.9 and 10: they were "destroyed of serpents," "were destroyed of the destroyer."

Correspondently with those expressions, we have various texts which state the doom of the unrepenting to be " death." Thus Paul writes, Romans 1.32: " They which commit such things are worthy of death."

Romans 5. 21: " Sin hath reigned unto death; or by death."

Romans 6.21: " The end of these things is death."

Romans 6.23: " The wages of sin is death."

Romans 8.13. " If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die."

The same apostle wrote to the Church at Corinth (2 Cor. 2.15), " To them that perish we are the savor of death unto death."

And to the Galatians (6. 8), " He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption."

In the Epistle of James (1. 15), we read that "Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death."

And again (James v. 20), " He that convert the sinner... shall save a soul from death."

In the Revelation of St. John, it is written (2. 11), " He that overcome shall not be hurt of the second death."

And in Rev. 20. 6, " On such the second death hath no power."

Rev. 20.14: " And death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

All these phrases, taken literally, and that is the manner in which we are at present viewing them, mean just what they express; namely, "death," loss of life, "perishing," or "destruction."

That such is their proper or literal import will be farther-illustrated by citing, in the next chapter, texts or clauses frequently connected with, and sometimes antithetical to them, which convey a contrasted sense by the expression " life."

## 13 On The Texts Which Promise "Life" To The Righteous.

THERE are several passages in three of the gospels which simply convey the promise of "life," without any epithet annexed to that term. In contrast with language already quoted, "Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction," we read in—

Matt. 7.14: "Strait is the gate... which leadeth unto life."

Matt. 18.8, 9: " It is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed," etc.

Matt. xix. 17: " If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments."



Mark 9. 43, 43: "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed," etc.

John 3.36: " He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

John 5. 28, 29: "All that are in the graves... shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life."

John 5. 40: "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life."

John 6.53: " Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man... ye have no life in you."

John 10.10: " I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly."

John 10.28: " And they shall never perish — or be destroyed."

John 20. 31: "These are written... that believing ye might have life through his name."

In the epistles also we find various instances of the like phraseology. Thus, in antithesis with a text already quoted, " If ye live after the flesh ye shall die," we read—

Romans 8.13: "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

And so, in antithesis with the words above quoted, "To them that perish we are the savor of death unto death," we have—

2 Cor. 2.16: " To the other" (i.e. the saved) " the savor of life unto life."

2 Cor. 5. 4: " That mortality might be swallowed up of life."

2 Tim. 1.1: " Paul, an apostle... according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus."

1 John 5. 12: " He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life."

Now taking, as we have proposed throughout, these expressions in their plain and literal meaning, the habitual contrast of the penalty of "death" with the free gift of "life," in declaring the opposite states and prospects of the saved and the condemned, has manifestly great weight against our interpreting " everlasting punishment" to mean the very contrary of death; namely, a life or conscious existence that shall never end.

No language, so far as the grammatical sense of words may go, can be more entirely opposed to such an expectation.

It can no way be fairly inferred from these remarks that we would treat the words "life" and "live," as here quoted, and the phrases "life everlasting," "endless life," as if they did not involve the idea and promise of perpetual well-being and happiness. They manifestly do involve and express this. The whole tenor of Scripture supports that conclusion. And so we hold, that except as to the irresponsible, "death," and "die," and "everlasting death," and " everlasting destruction," involve the notion and denouncement of prior severe and awful suffering; how protracted, God knows. But it is not the less certain, and it would, we think, were it not for preconceived opinions, be most obvious to all, that the multiplied use of the words "die " and " death," in reference to future punishment, is a strong presumptive argument against the doctrine of unending life in sin and torment; for that would mean, in all ordinary use of speech, the reverse of death.

On the other hand, this habitual contrast of death with life, as the apparently final issue, is in like manner opposed to the literal interpretation of those various passages cited in Chapter 11 which would seem, if taken literally, to promise universal restoration; and it accordingly confirms the necessity or propriety of interpreting those in a very restricted sense.

#### 14 On The Texts Which Declare The Future Suffering Of The Wicked.

IN order to present the whole of the New Testament evidence on this painful subject, it remains that we adduce the several passages which intimate the sufferings of the impenitent. We have our Lord's declaration (Matt. 8.12), " The children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matt. 13.41, 42, repeated verse 50, "The angels shall gather out of his kingdom them which do iniquity; shall sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

In one of our Savior's parables it is said, concerning him that had not the wedding garment (Matt. 22. 13), "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

And in the parable of the wicked servant (Matt. 24. 51), his Lord " shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

So in the parable of the talents we read (Matt. 25. 30), " Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In the passages already quoted from the Gospel of Mark, the sinner is thrice warned (9. 43-48) of " Gehenna, the fire unquenchable, where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched." In Luke's Gospel our Savior utters the solemn denunciation (13. 27, 28), "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out."

And in the same Gospel, it is declared of the rich sinner (Luke 16.23-25 and 28), " In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and said, father Abraham, send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame;" and again, " Send" to my "brethren," " lest they also come into this place of torment."

We read also in the Apocalypse, concerning him that worshipped the beast (14. 9, 10), " The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured unmixed into the cup of his indignation, and shall be tormented with fire and brimstone before the holy angels and before the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascended for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoso received the mark of his name."

Concerning " the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars," we read (Revel. 21. 8), " They shall have their part in the lake which burned with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

These passages, as we judge, add no material force to the argument against ultimate restoration, inasmuch as that is admitted by its advocates to be preceded by severe and protracted sufferings; but neither do they materially strengthen the argument for never-ending sin and misery; since their validity for supporting that argument must depend on the same rule of interpretation which shall be adopted in regard to texts previously cited (in Chapter x.),\* into which rule we still have to inquire.

Yet these last-named passages concerning the sufferings of the wicked, have an important bearing on our whole subject, inasmuch as they, concurring with those of Chapter 17. below, still the more clearly forbid our viewing the penalty of " death" or " destruction" as the whole retribution threatened against the impenitent; showing that a state and period of conscious suffering will awfully introduce and form a dreadful prelude to that final penalty. Indeed, such an opinion as these Scripture testimonies preclude, namely, that mere and immediate " destruction" will be the whole doom of the unrepenting, is, we believe, rarely if ever held by any persons professing faith in Scripture; although it is sometimes, by opponents who are unable or disinclined to exercise discrimination, unjustly imputed to them.

Dr. Whitby says, with truth, "If annihilation only be the second death, the punishment and perdition threatened to sinners in the other world, they must all suffer equally; because if there be no degrees of annihilation or not-being, then all will equally not be, or lose their being; and nothing by annihilation can lose more."

This is a very obvious truth, or might even be termed a truism. But the present chapter shows that it is wholly irrelevant to our view of the subject. Nor are we acquainted with any Christian writer who maintains the opinion which it combats.

## 15 On The Question How Far Man's Necessary Or Universal Immortality Is Taught By Reason Or Scripture.

THOSE divines who maintain the doctrine of unending misery generally premise or presuppose the natural, and in some sort necessary, immortality of the human soul; natural, in the sense that, unless God by an express act destroy it, the soul will never cease to be and to be conscious; necessary, in the sense that it would be unfit and unworthy of the Deity so to destroy. This they infer sometimes primarily from reason; sometimes from reason and Scripture jointly. Dr. It. W. Hamilton appears to deem the proof from reason sufficient. He writes, " We argue with confidence, that as man can plead his immortality, he cannot be less than immortal." " Immortality is as much a property and determination of his nature as reason, or any quality besides." "Nothing agrees with the annihilation, everything agrees with the immortality of the soul." " The truth of this immortality is not speculative, but rests in consciousness and capacity. No revelation could overthrow the fact, for to dispute the fact would be to overthrow its own pretensions." "We have argued, from the moral susceptibilities and inappeasable longings of the soul, that it is immortal. The power of conceiving it amounts to demonstration."

It is added, in a later part of this work, " Let us think of the attitude in which the doctrine of the soul's annihilation places the Deity. Man, being immortal, a workmanship of the richest store, the heir of measureless blessings, is directly crushed." " God, in this act of destruction, is seen to revoke his own design." " This annihilation is not a moral act. It is physical." " All of power in God, as coalescing with infinite excellence, we can adore. But a power, independent, detached, violent, we know not, nor is there any like power revealed. We do not feel that our esteem for Deity is excited by the triumph of such power over his moral perfections. In punishment we saw Him just: in annihilation He is irresistible! Nor do we acknowledge that the best method of winning our hearts, to Him is to lead us to the footstool of the throne on which He sits, surrounded by the emblems of destruction and the wrecks of existence!"

Professor Moses Stuart begins his Essays by speaking of man as " a being endowed with a spirit Which can never cease to exist;" and subjoins, "He who made us in His own image, made us immortal like Himself; immortal in regard to the powers and faculties, as well as the existence, of the soul: the immortal subjects, therefore, of happiness or misery."

It must, however, be on the scriptural proof that this writer alone relies; since he afterwards adds, " The light of nature has never yet sufficed to make even the question clear to any portion of our benighted race, whether the soul of man is immortal. Cicero, incomparably the most able defender of the soul's immortality of which the heathen world can yet boast, very ingenuously confesses, that after all the arguments which he had adduced to confirm the doctrine, it so fell out that his mind was satisfied of it only when directly employed in contemplating the arguments in its favor. At other times he fell into a state of doubt and darkness."\* Again, " It is notorious that Socrates, the next most able advocate among the heathen for the same doctrine, has adduced arguments to establish the never-ceasing existence of the soul, which will not bear the test of examination. How true it is, that life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel.' It is equally true they are brought to light only there."

Yet it would appear by the former quotation, that this author supposed them to have been brought to light long before, in the declaration, " God made man in his own image."

Now, we are far from questioning that strong presumptive arguments for a future life, and even for an immortal life of man, in connection with his well-being, are to be drawn from nature and reason. On the contrary, we highly appreciate them.

Yet it has been correctly said, that " Socrates and his disciples are represented by Plato as admitting that men in general were highly incredulous as to the soul's future existence, and as expecting that it would at the moment of death be dispersed like air or smoke, and cease altogether to exist; so that it would require no little persuasion and argument to convince them that the soul can exist after death, and retain anything of its powers and intelligence." This admission certainly goes to corroborate Professor Stuart's statements as to the insufficiency of natural light.

With regard to the proof of man's immortality from the expression (Gen. 1.27), " So God created man in his own image: in the image of God created he him," it is to be observed that divines have on this greatly differed. Bishop Warburton argued that "the image of God consisted, not in his having an immaterial soul, for that is common to the whole animal creation; but in his reason."\* Dr. South, in a sermon on the text, defines the image of God in man to have been "that universal rectitude of all the faculties of the soul by which they stand apt and disposed to their respective offices and operations." But if we choose to admit that the expression "image of God" does indicate, among other attributes, the gift of immortality, in what sense is this to be, necessarily, taken? God only hath immortality: a whole, unsuccessive, indestructible being. This alone involves omniscience. But it cannot be supposed that God endowed man with an immortality which, although successive, was independent and irrevocable. This would have been not merely to create a sort of Demigod, but to limit his own divine Omnipotence.

No one affirms the absolute dependence of a creature's being more fully than the Rev. C. Bradley; himself an earnest defender of the doctrine of endless evil. Thus he writes, " We shall live for ever, simply because it is the will of Him who gave us life, to preserve us in being. Without Him our souls are as liable to be destroyed as our bodies: yea, let Him for one moment be unmindful of an immortal spirit, and in that very moment that spirit has ceased to be. This truth is not sufficiently remembered by us. We seem to think that our souls have some natural claim to the eternity before us, and that Omnipotence itself has no power to destroy them: but the thought is vain. The God, who is the Father of our spirits, could annihilate as easily as He made them. Crowded as is the universe with the living heirs of immortality, a word from his lips would leave it for ever without an inhabitant, and turn his own heaven into a desert, without a spirit rejoicing in it, or an angel worshipping before his throne."\*

What is it, then, for man to be immortal? It is to have a loan of existence sustained every moment by divine energy, capable of being endless. " If," says Baxter, reasoning with a sceptic, "by corruptible you mean that which hath a certainty of perishing if God uphold it not, I grant it of the whole creation." He subjoins, "No doubt there is, unto all beings, a continual emanation or influx from God, which is a continued causation."

But does it in any wise follow, that because God created man capable of immortality, and even adapted for it, therefore his Creator wills and ought in all instances to communicate immortality, or go on to support the creature's being without end? May He not have, with the best reason, a different purpose; and if it be so, shall we presume to say that He "is seen to revoke his own design?"

Dr. Watts, when arguing for the extinction of the infants of wicked parents, observes, " It will perhaps be objected, of what use can it be for the great God to bring so many thousand souls of the children of wicked parents into being, to destroy them so soon? Answer. Who can tell me of what use it can be for God to create so many millions of animated beings in the sea, or in the woods and deserts, for so short a continuance? Who can tell why He should exert his almighty power to produce so many myriads of fishes which man never sees, and insects, engines of curious and divine artifice, of which millions are brought forth in one day, which are never seen of men, and which in a few weeks or months perish again, and are lost for ever? It is as easy with Omnipotence to create souls as bodies, or to make men as worms; and it is the illustrious and unconceivable magnificence of his government, that He can produce worlds of such wonderful creatures, and destroy them without any loss, though He should never acquaint us with any of his reasons or purposes for this conduct."\*

We know also that the first man was threatened with the penalty of death (Gen. 2.17): "Thou shalt surely die;" or, " dying thou shalt die" (3.19); " dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Even if it were to be granted that an intimation of suffering after death was conveyed in those words (which is not apparent), still would the remark of Locke retain its force, " It seems a strange way of understanding a law, that by death should be meant endless life in misery."

We ought here to notice that a well-known argument has been raised for the immortality of the soul, from the belief that the ultimate atoms of matter are indestructible; and as the soul, although sui generic, is, like them, in its being, one and indivisible, it must be indestructible also. This argument has been put ably and successfully by the late Professor Thomas Brown, of Edinburgh, in his " Lectures on the Mind." It is very valuable; for if ultimate atoms are indiscerptible, and therefore indestructible, except by God's will, so, more strongly concluding, both from reasoning and consciousness, that the spirit is one and indivisible, we are yet more certain that it will never perish, except the will of God cease to uphold it. Still, it is to us a supposition lacking proof, that it never has been God's will and act, since the first creation, to destroy any material atoms; and equally destitute of proof, that He never has and never will destroy any spirits which He hath made. The former is undoubtedly asserted; but the grounds of absolute proof for it we have either not seen, or cannot remember.

## 16 On The Doom Of Those Who Perished In The General Deluge.

As a sort of touchstone for the opinion last discussed (that of a certainly universal immortality for human beings), we would call to mind the case of that generation which perished in the general deluge. The record preliminary to those events is found in Genesis, chap. 6., where we read (verses 5, 6) the very remarkable statement, " God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented Jehovah that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at his heart."

This emphatic declaration must have some weighty meaning. Expositors in general tell us what it must not be taken to mean—justly warning us against attributing human variableness or passion to the Deity—rather than attempt to set forth precisely what it does mean; which indeed we judge to be above a human expositor's ken.

The words, it is presumed, cannot mean less, than that the great prevalence and continuance of mankind's wickedness was highly adverse to the divine mind and will, and was reason for destroying those who wrought it. They seem to mean more than this, although what more it may be hard to discover or define.

But taken in the sense proposed, or taken literally in any sense, they certainly in no way or degree indicate that it was God's will and purpose to perpetuate the being of those sinners. If there be any one event which the language makes improbable, it is this: that Jehovah should make those immortal whom it is said to have "repented Him that He had made" at all; should will or permit those to exist unendingly, as sinners and sufferers, whom it is declared to have "grieved Him at his heart" that He had created, or caused to exist.

Then follows (verse 7) the declaration of the divine purpose: "Jehovah said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repented me that I have made them."

Now we need not, in estimating this destruction, adopt the views of Bishop Newton, who says, "it is reasonably computed, that the number of antediluvians amounted to many millions more than the present inhabitants of the earth."\* Let us rather believe, with Dr. Pye Smith, that their "number was really small."-I- Suppose it a very small fraction (the nine-hundredth part) of our modern world's population, and that thus only a million of human lives were destroyed by the deluge.

It is observable that the same word "destroy" is applied to "man and beast, and the creeping thing and fowls of the air." But, according to the theologians above cited, God willed, while he swept them from this globe, to sustain in immortality that guilty million; to permit the "wickedness which was so great in the earth" to be augmented by endless additions in Hades, and "the imagination of the thoughts of those hearts which had been only evil continually" to be perpetuated everlastingly.\*

Dr. Hamilton admits, "man is only a creature, therefore dependent, and only exists in immortality, as he is immortally vivified and upheld. God sustains him at every breath and pulse."\* God, then, could have "destroyed" that wicked and unhappy million by simply withholding his creative or preserving energy; or, after a period of retributive suffering, could have let them drop into non-existence. But not so. Although "holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty," and wickedness is "the abominable thing that He hates," still it was his will—according to these divines—that this aggregate of wickedness and misery should be strictly everlasting. We repeat, the phrases by which this account is prefaced must have some weighty meaning, though expositors are unable to say precisely what meaning. It is said of the supremely Good, whose name is Love, that man's great wickedness "grieved Him at his heart;" and then, we are taught, that He "destroyed" man, by consigning him to an endless being in wickedness and misery. Let it be judged whether the depraved and doomed million of antediluvians could be fitly designated "the heirs of measureless blessings." But whatever title were given them, they need not, if blotted out of being, have been "directly crushed;" for the mere and simple withholding of divine energy would have let them and their sins and anguish cease to be. The very "emblems of destruction" would have returned to naught. The very "wrecks of their existence" would have utterly vanished. Do the advocates for a necessary immortality conceive that "the best method of winning our hearts" is to set before us a sort of destruction, which consists in the indestructibility of depravity and despair? If that immeasurably dreadful result were in the prescient or omniscient view of God, could we conceive of it as compatible with the perfect felicity of a Being perfectly good? Rather would not the words "grieved Him at his heart" be in that case but a faint expression of the painfulness of such a fact and prospect?

Some minds, even on the ground of Gen. 1.26, 27, which can no way favor it except by an unwarranted inference as to the certain endless life of all men, may be devoutly to that mystery as an act of pious submission to God's unsearchable sovereignty. For us it would, on the contrary, be profaneness to believe it; and, above all, on grounds which are for us so palpably conjectural and insufficient.

The more this question is examined, the more strongly do we hold to that scriptural statement—which Professor Stuart himself adduces—Jesus Christ alone "hath made life and incorruption clear through the gospel." But the very terms of this text intimate what the New Testament everywhere expresses, that "life," "incorruption," "immortality," are "the gift of God through Jesus Christ." They are first "brought to light" or "made clear" "through the gospel," as "good tidings of great joy."

#### 17 Texts, Which Are Thought To Declare Endless Punishment, With Ultimate "Destruction."

THE stress of proof for the endless suffering of the wicked is chiefly laid on the phrases "punishment everlasting", in Matt. 25.46; "everlasting condemnation", in Mark 3.29; "their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched", in Mark 9. 43; "destruction everlasting", in 2 Thess. 1.9; "everlasting judgment", in Heb. 6.2.

It is contended that these phrases plainly and unequivocally declare the doctrine.

The most forcible of them—as has been already remarked—is held to be the first (of Matthew), on account of its being placed in antithesis with "life everlasting." It is therefore to this phrase that our attention will be first and principally given. Although nothing is more certain than that both those words have also other and different meanings, which will be afterwards treated of, we shall accept here, as their primary sense, the version "punishment everlasting." But then we must take the phrase as a whole. Punishment stands as much in antithesis with "life," as "everlasting" with "everlasting." But this is in opposite modes. If "everlasting" be antithetic in the way of parallel, "punishment" is antithetic in the way of contrast. Will it be said that, in order to an absolute antithesis of contrast, the phrase should have been "death everlasting?" I we judge from their reasonings on the term "death," this would not have been held, by believers in endless suffering, to disprove the doctrine.

About fourteen texts of the New Testament, to which many might be added from the Old, appear to declare the ultimate destruction of the wicked. We have seen also this fact or prospect very frequently put in direct contrast with the promise of "life;" and it cannot be reasonable, or respectful to the Scriptures, that those many passages should be allowed no influence on the interpretation of this, or rather should all be ruled by the supposed meaning of this and a few others; so that "death" and "destruction" should be construed as meaning indestructible existence in all of them, in order to conform their import to the doctrine for which the de-fenders of endless suffering contend.

An important reason, if we mistake not, will present itself in subsequent pages, why the term "punishment" should have been here employed as more comprehensively appropriate. That this word is sometimes applied to the punishment of death, we see in the Septuagint (Wisdom of Solomon 19. 4, 5), where, concerning the pursuing host of Pharaoh it is said, "that they might fulfil the punishment which was wanting to their torments, and that thy people might pass a wonderful way, but they might find a strange death." And again, 2 Macc. 4. 38, where we read that Antiochus "slew Andronicus the murderer" (of Onias), "the Lord rendering to him his deserved punishment." Nor is the punishment of destruction unfitly termed "everlasting punishment." The memorable destruction in the Red Sea, above referred to, the frightful death of Ravallac (the murderer of Henry IV. of France), and still more torturing destruction of Damien (who attempted to assassinate Louis XV.), might be so described. The penalty was everlasting and irreversible, as far as human power could make it so. It destroyed, as far as man can destroy, the subjects of it everlastingly; and, moreover, it is an everlasting fact in memory and in warning; an infliction or penalty adapted to be of everlasting note and effect after its subjects have been destroyed.

The mortal existence of the Egyptian host, and of the doomed assassins, is blotted out for ever. The penalty or forfeit is everlasting to them. Their punishment is an everlasting memorial of retributive justice to others.

Dr. Watts, we observe, in reference to the future state of those infants, whom he supposes reduced to non-existence after death, describes this as "an everlasting forfeiture of life, and a sort of endless punishment without pain." It will be obvious how fully, when we thus take "punishment everlasting" to mean ultimate and everlasting destruction, the text is brought into accordance with other most impressive and awful warnings. "Fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." "The wages of sin is death." "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." The same idea appears to be conveyed in the words of 2 Thess. 1.9: "Destruction everlasting from the presence of the Lord." Why, then, should the phrases, Mark 3.29, or, Heb. 6.2, require any other interpretation than that of "the second death," which is everlasting; a final and remediless destruction?

Neither can the expression, "where their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched," amount to any affirmation of an endless existence in torment, when we consider that it is an allusion to the last words of the prophecy of Isaiah, where we read (in the Septuagint version), concerning the carcasses or corpses of transgressors, "their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched." The living worm, in reference to carcasses, indicates solely their continued putrescence. It is remarkable that the second clause occurs three times in Leviticus 6.9, 12, 13, where we read (verse 9), (verse 12,) (verse 13.). Our English version is (verse 12), "The fire upon the altar shall be burning in it; it shall not be put out;" (verse 13.) "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out."

In Jeremiah 17, the same phrase occurs: "Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched."

We fully admit that, in our Savior's allusion to these words, torment is intended, and that they are made to shadow forth a dreadful doom; but since the corpses and the worms have perished, and the altars and the palaces have been subverted, and the fires become extinct for ages, we cannot think such emblems an adequate foundation for the terrible dogma of unending sin and misery, but rather, if anything, an intimation of the very reverse—a suggestion of the blessed hope that evil shall be at length consumed like the ancient corpses, and extinguished like the altar's fire.

#### 18 On The Plural Or Diverse Senses Of Some Words Affecting This Controversy.

WHILE thus stating what we deem to be the most patent or obvious, and most widely applicable sense of Scripture in regard to future punishment, we yet see reason to think that another and ulterior sense is also admissible, although it may have a less extended application.

Notwithstanding the elaborate essay of Professor Stuart showing that the words in the New Testament (generally rendered "ever" and "everlasting") do, in a great majority of instances, mean an everlasting or unlimited duration, still the fact remains, and is necessarily admitted by him, that these words are also frequently used to express limited periods; and that the sense of them in every case must depend on the nature of the subject to which they are applied.\* That alcoves (ages) sometimes mean a limited period, is manifest from 1 Cor. 10.11,

"These things are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come;"\* and from Heb. 9. 26, " Now once at the conclusion of the ages hath he" (Christ) "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."

Then, on the other hand, we read in 1 Cor. 2.7, of "the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the ages."

An end of ages, and a beginning or eternity anterior to the ages, are thus declared; and one sees not how the limited sense of the term could be more expressly made apparent.

In like manner, with regard to the term "everlasting," we read in 2 Tim. 1.9, of God's " own purpose and grace, given us in Christ Jesus before the times of the ages (or eval times);" and again, in Titus 1.2, " in hope of everlasting life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the times of the ages, or eval times."

Moreover, this literal rendering of the last-named text makes it evident that nearness, and even a sort of antithetic juxtaposition, cannot at all prove identity of sense. For it is clear that in the first clause means, according to the view of those who argue for its largest sense (in which also we concur), " life everlasting;" and in the second clause can mean only age-lasting (or secular or eval) times; before which was an eternity.

A somewhat similar but still more impressive instance occurs in Rom. 16.25, 26: " The mystery kept secret in eval or ancient times, but now made manifest, according to the commandment of the eternal God."

Here it is most evident that the sense of the second clause, supposing it to declare the divine eternity, must essentially differ from its meaning in the first clause. There it means only ancient—within the cycles of time: here it means the eternal, without beginning as without end.

If farther proof be desired that the close and even antithetic juxtaposition of the same word sometimes takes place in the New Testament with a great diversity of meaning, we have it in John 3.8: " The wind blows where it lists, and thou Nearest the sound thereof, but knows not whence it cometh and whither it goes: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." It had been said just above, " that which is born of the spirit is spirit."

In 2 Cor. 5. 2, we read, " He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin;" where the latter sin in the first clause of our version, either means "a sin-offering," or else that Christ was treated as if a sinner.

We confidently maintain therefore that if in Matt. 25. 46, to be interpreted to mean in the first clause a protracted but terminable being of the wicked in suffering, and in the second a strictly everlasting life of the saints, those two senses differ less, than when it is used in the sentence above cited (Romans 16.25, 26) to speak on the one hand of God's absolute eternity, and on the other of ancient or age-enduring times: incomparably less also than the two senses, when it is employed in the same verse to signify the Uncreated Spirit and the inanimate air; and far less than the two senses, when employed to denote in one clause sin, and in the other the sinless victim.

Further, it should not be overlooked that spoken words (oral utterances) recorded in the gospels, are not given in the language in which they were uttered. Let it be granted that the Greek version of each word spoken by Christ in Syro-Chaldaic or Hebrew is strictly an inspired version; still both these are less exact languages than the Greek; and while the words alien', alloan, were doubtless the very fittest for rendering the word (or its equivalent in the Syro-Chaldaic or Aramean), those original words had probably a somewhat more flexible and indefinite meaning and application. Thus we read—Deut. 15.17: " So shall he be thy servant forever," i.e. all his life. 1 Sam. 27. 12: " Achish said he shall be my servant forever." Ps. xxi. 4: "Thou gayest him length of days for ever and ever." 1 Kings 1.31: "Bathsheba said, let my lord king David live forever." Neh. 2.3: " Let the king live forever." Deut. 32. 7: "Remember the days of old." Gen. 6.4: " The daughters of men bare children, and they became mighty men of old." Ezek. 26. 20: "The people of old time." In all these texts the term is used.

Hence we may certainly infer that the version by was not chosen solely for its power to express endlessness, but rather for that degree of ambiguity, or capability of varied application, which made it as nearly as might be a parallel to.

We have now further to examine the meanings of the word. It has been shown already, in Chapter 16, that this word, which, is properly enough rendered by the general term punishment, sometimes means the punishment of death.

But then it also, as undoubtedly, has often the sense of remedial correction, or chastisement. Indeed, it appears that this was its more proper sense in classic Greek, from Aristotle's distinction—

Philo Judaeus uses the word in both its senses. He writes of "inflicting continual punishment, moderate to those whose trespasses are curable, but very severe as to the incurable. For though in themselves they seem odious, yet are punishments the greatest good to the foolish, as medicines are to the diseased in body."

Thus it is placed, as we judge, beyond fair and reasonable dispute, that the phrase taken by itself might be literally and truly rendered "eval or age-lasting chastisement." And it has also been made sufficiently apparent, from other and stronger New Testament instances, that the antithetic juxtaposition of "life everlasting," does not at all forbid such an interpretation, if on other grounds it can be justified.

#### 19 On The Dual Or Plural Sense Of Some Other Passages, And Its Application To Our Subject.

IT will, of course, be objected, Do you then plead for two discrepant interpretations of the same words? We answer, if it shall appear that, in several passages of the New Testament, certain words include or involve a plurality of meanings, then the supposition of a second or ulterior sense is not a supposition of discrepancy; and the analogy of faith admits and probably demands that we should so regard the text in question.

Now such a plurality of meanings is generally recognized in various special prophecies and general moral predictions. Thus "the Holy Spirit says to Peter (Acts 10.15), on his refusing to touch and taste promiscuously the creatures shown him in his vision, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common." No one who reads that narrative can doubt of its having this double sense: 1. That the distinction be-tween clean and unclean meats was to be abolished. 2. That the Gentiles were to be called into the church of Christ."

When the same apostle said to our Lord (John 13.8), "Thou shalt never wash my feet," the divine Teacher answered, " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" which words have the twofold sense-1, of a severe caution against disobedience to Christ's immediate and most condescending purpose; 2, of a solemn intimation concerning the necessity, to true discipleship and union with Him, of spiritual washing by his expiatory blood, and by the effusion of the Holy Ghost.

Again, our Savior enjoined (Matt. xxiv. 44, comp. Mark 13.30-37, and Luke xxi. 34-36), "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." And this injunction appears to have had a threefold sense. 1. Be ye ready for the impending destruction of Jerusalem, from which ye shall have to take flight. 2. Be ye ready for my final "coming in the clouds of heaven." 3. Be ye ready for my coming by the message of death, which may long precede that public advent.

In all these senses it had an important practical application for those who heard it. The last sense has proved to be the most important for myriads who have since read it, but to whom the Savior came in death before his great appearing.

Both the last and second sense demand the devout regard of those to whom He may either come in like sort, or who may be " alive and remain" at his public and glorious reappearance.

In a prediction by Christ Himself, generally allowed to be of a mixed and twofold import, referring primarily to the siege of Jerusalem, and ulteriorly to the world's dissolution and the judgment day (of which that event was to be a type), these words of our Savior occur (Matt. 24. 34, comp. Mark 13.30, and Luke 21.32): "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." In its primary meaning, the passage must refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, but some suppose, and we think with reason, that the phrase is here to be taken as including an ulterior sense, " this family or race; and that it thus declares, without addition of words, a second and very impressive fact; namely, that "this race or family" of the Jews, so long scattered in its great and last dispersion, shall not pass away till the great consummation of all things: a prophecy which, through at least eighteen centuries, has been as yet verified.

If it be said of these passages that they are not parallel to the one under discussion, we reply, that a strict parallel can no way be expected; it suffices if by them we show that there is room to expect at times a secondary or ulterior sense.

Proofs have already been given (Chapter xviii.t) that a word or phrase has sometimes diverse meanings where used repeatedly in the same passage. But we have seen in the last-named texts that a word or phrase has sometimes plural meanings where it stands alone. "What God hath cleansed," describes meats once forbidden, and also the heathen to be called into the church; to "wash," means both literal ablution and spiritual purification; " the Son of man's coming" refers both to events long past and to events still future—the ruin of the holy city—the deaths of the saints—the great and final day.

The term probably describes not only "the generation," some of whom witnessed that first awful visitation, but also that race or family who are to subsist until the last and still more awful scene.

Why, then, may not the phrase—which unquestionably includes a manifold diversity of degrees of punishment—likewise involve a great twofold distinction as to its duration and object? namely, the "destruction everlasting" of many, and the protracted (age-lasting) correction, or sanatory chastisement of some others. The phrase—as we have shown above—might fitly describe either; why should it not be comprehensive of both?

An eminent French divine, when commenting on several meanings included in St. Paul's words, "The love of Christ constrained us," has remarked, " They that have written on eloquence should have noticed one figure of speech which I think has not been observed—I mean a sublime ambiguity; the method of one who, not being able to express the fulness of his ideas by terms of single meaning, makes use of such as convey various thoughts."\*

Is not this plenitude, this plurality or pregnancy of meaning, just what might be expected from the manifold wisdom of a prescient all-comprehending mind? So viewing it, we cannot see that it would be right or reverential wholly to exclude that hope, of which in the last chapter some grounds have been suggested, that the passage which has been most urged in support of the doctrine of endless misery, has in it a pregnant and ulterior meaning; a reference, partially latent, yet easily discoverable, to the manifold diversities of that great judgment, which Infinite wisdom and justice and goodness will institute and fulfil.

## 20 On The Doctrine Of Partial Or Occasional Restoration.

THE doctrine of "universal restoration"—though it has been plausibly advocated—we think is wholly unwarranted by a general and impartial searching of the sacred Scriptures. For us therefore it would be an irreverent and presumptuous tenet; but, on the other hand, to deny the possibility of restoration in any case, with so many passages of Scripture in our remembrance, which apparently favor the expectation, would be for us irreverent and presumptuous likewise.

The believers in universal restoration have to nullify or extenuate (which we think they attempt with very imperfect success) the awful declaration of our Lord concerning Judas (Matt. 26. 24, Mark 14.21), " Good were it for that man if he had not been born." But then the very fact of this declaration being found applied to that unique and extreme case, specially and only, seems to us to check, if not preclude, the belief of its being always applicable, and to cases even the most widely differing; which it would be if we restricted God's judgment to universal " everlasting destruction" of all who depart this life unrenewed.

Dr. Adam Clarke seems to us to have imposed on himself and his readers a sophism, when, in commenting on Matt. 26. 24, he asks, " Can the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked consist with this declaration, " It would have been well for that man if he had not been born?" Then he must be in some state of conscious existence, as non-existence is said to be better than that state in which he is now found." But this, although it may be strictly a truth, is not at all necessarily the truth stated in the text. The drift of the words—supposing Judas to be utterly destroyed now, or even then—is plain and significant thus: non-existence originally and wholly (i.e. never to have been) would have been far better for him than the non-existence to which he is now reduced, as the result of his own guilt and misery.

Even had the criminal been utterly and instantly " destroyed" after his base hypocrisies and final crime, no wise and good man can doubt that it would still have been far better for him if he had never been born, rather than have lived a thief and deceiver, and died a base ingrate and traitor.

Or suppose that by miracle he could have come into being with mature powers, and consummated his whole guilt and ended his entire existence in one day, still would it have been better for him never to have been, than to have had his brief day of life filled only with crime and with remorse, leaving behind it the ineffaceable record and memory of both?

We presume not to entertain the opinion which one of the earliest fathers of the church did not scruple to publish in his First Apology, " Christ is the first-born of God, and the Logos or wisdom, of which all the race of men partook; and they who have lived with wisdom are Christians, even though they were accounted atheists, as, among the Greeks, Socrates and Heraclitus, and those who were like them." But still less can we venture to affirm or argue, that for those men, or for Plato, Phocion, Solon, Aristides, and for other Gentiles distinguished by virtue, though never widely known, or long forgotten, " it were good that they had not been born."

St. Paul wrote (Rom. 2.14), " When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves."

And our divine Master has declared (Luke 12.48), " He that knew not" (i.e. his Lord's will), " and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." He has warned us also (Matt. 7.1, 2), "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you." We see not how "few stripes" (contrasted with "many") can be ascertained to mean "everlasting destruction;" far less how such a phrase could be used to denote endless torment.

We are restrained, and not merely by the warning above cited, but by the general spirit of the gospel, from " meting" with such a measure.

Far be it from us to pronounce, that for such Gentiles, who sought God, " if haply they might feel after Him and find Him," there can be no ultimate boon of faith and repentance, of mercy and of life, through his atoning merits, who is " a propitiation for the sins of the whole world."

This hope of a partial restoration, i.e. of the ultimate recovery of some who, having come short of the promised rest, shall yet not undergo irremediable destruction from the presence of the Lord, might still be admissible, even if we understood the final sentence on the unsaved—in the last day, when "before Him shall stand all nations"—as involving in all cases "punishment everlasting," i.e. ultimate destruction in the most remediless sense. It leaves and allows a happy significance to those various and important texts, which declare the final subjection and unity of all that shall continue to exist.

It also procures ampler scope for that incalculably vast diversity, and refined exactness of discrimination, which must assuredly have place in the divine awards to the differing individuals of those countless multitudes that have dwelt and shall dwell upon our earth.

And this consideration appears indispensable to any right thoughts of a universal judgment.

We have to reflect on the immense varieties and dissimilarities of human condition, constitution, capacity, and nurture; the strength of passions, the defect or power of intellect, the controlling circumstances from birth to mature age, from the most savage ignorance or fatuity to the highest forms of civilization and talent; from the darkest idolatry, or most negative stupor, to the clearest revealed light and the most distinct perception of its value.\*

Moreover, if we look at those inconceivably multiform and those minutely graduated differences, which the Author and Preserver of nature has caused and maintained, between different orders of human, animal, and vegetable life, between each of the unnumbered individuals of each order, and each organ and faculty of every single object, how much more and greater, must we not infer, will be the 'discriminating exactitude and multitudinous diversity of the divine procedure, as to the respective moral destiny of each one moral being.

curable might be a means of warning and recovery to the "curable", so long as these should successively enter Hades.

Plato likewise expected that most transgressors would be, by severe and long punishment, curable. He writes, "I think the greater part of such examples will consist of tyrants, kings, potentates, and political leaders, for these through their power commit the greatest and most impious crimes." "Thersites, or any other private man who was depraved, no one has represented as suffering great vindictive punishments, as if incurable." —Oorgias, Ed. Routh, p. 295.

This further appears in the Phaedo (c. 57), where he says of the carnal soul which resisted its being conveyed to Hades, that " it wanders in all constrained perplexity till certain periods have passed, and then of necessity is borne into the abode befitting it." Hence we see that the words of Professor Stuart—" did not the Greeks and Romans hold to the eternity of future punishments? Notoriously they did;"<sup>1</sup> and of the late Dr. Hamilton, "that they believed purifications not wrought upon the wicked, but upon the good"—convey quite erroneous impressions. It is clear that gradation, in the continuance, as well as in the severity of punishment, was the heathen creed; whereas the Christian believer in endless misery allows, in continuance, no gradation.

## 21 On Partial Or Occasional Restoration (Continued).

WIZEN these things are duly weighed, it will be certainly deemed in the highest measure probable—to us, indeed, it appears beyond a doubt—that innumerable varieties, both of duration and degree, will characterize God's condemning judgments.

At the same time it was, as we judge, fully to be expected, from that prevailing conciseness of Scripture statements respecting things unseen, which conduces so greatly to their impressiveness and force, that all would be included and summed up, as we find it, in the brief antithetic enunciation of those two extremes of human destiny—"punishment everlasting, life everlasting;" between or within which, as between opposite extreme points, countless gradations of every kind are undoubtedly comprised. It is observable, that in

the antithetic text there is no more intimation of degrees of greatness or intensity than of degrees in duration, and it might therefore be plausibly argued—if we limited our view to this text, without reference to others which lead to a different conclusion—that all punishments and all rewards will be equal. So fallacious would it be to draw positive conclusions as to either point—that of degree or that of duration—from a single text.

But moreover, and without looking so far forward as the general and public judgment there referred to, we find no sufficient ground for denying that there may at least be some restorations antecedently to that event: in the separate state of spirits. The language of our Savior is remarkable (Matt. 12.32): " Whoso speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whoso speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the future." Although this may have been a sort of proverbial phrase with the Rabbis, it yet appears here adapted and designed for a brief intimation, that there have been instances of repentance and remission of sins granted in the " world to come " —the Scheol or Hades of separate spirits.\* The expression must otherwise be regarded as a mere pleonasm, which it seems not reverent to attribute to the language of our Savior, uttered in so solemn a warning.

The so-called parable of the rich man and Lazarus must be understood as referring to that state.

It was in Hades (Scheol) that the rich man lifted up his eyes, and sees Lazarus at a distance.\* The scene is the region of departed souls, intersected by a great gulf (a profound chasm and perhaps torrent), which makes them mutually unapproachable. " Those passages. of Scripture (e. g. Matt 12.32, 1 Pet. 3.18, and 4. 6) whose contents the Church found occasion to embody in the very heart of her doctrinal system, speak of a return from the dead) (Scheol, Hades) and of the possibility therein implied of sin being forgiven after death. In this parable, therefore, nothing can possibly be said of the everlasting condemnation of the rich man, inasmuch as the germ of love, and of faith in love, is clearly expressed in his words." Some belief and hope of such deliverances prior to the "last day" of resurrection and final judgment, certainly existed in the early church.

Augustine (De Civ. Dei, lib. xxi. c. 13) plainly states it: " But temporary pains some suffer in this life only; some after death, some both now and then; but before that most severe and latest judgment. But not all come into those sempiternal pains, which after that judgment shall be for those who endure the temporal after death. For to some that which is not forgiven in this, shall be forgiven in the age or world to come, lest they be punished with the eternal punishment of the future world, as we have said above."

Clemens Alexandrinus (about A.D. 194) wrote that " the apostles, in sequence to their Lord, evangelized those in Hades,"—"leading the Gentiles to conversion:" and added, " for the punishments of God are salutary and instructive, leading to conversion, and preferring the repentance to the death of the sinner; and souls separated from their bodies, even though darkened by passions, are able to discern more clearly, on account of being no longer encumbered with the flesh." These opinions may seem very fanciful, and by many they will be deemed anti-scriptural. But they at least show that such hopes are not a modern innovation; having been entertained in the fourth and second centuries by men of high character and unquestioned piety.

And now we subjoin a simple but important query:—If these general views should at last prove to be the right and scriptural views of man's futurity, namely, that the true followers of Christ shall pass at death to commence a happy endless life, that the impenitent, after protracted suffering, shall be destroyed in death everlasting, while some others obtaining repentance amidst those chastisements of an unseen state, shall ultimately attain to life and peace—if these issues (viewed in the broad divisions which alone we are capable of making) should prove to be the true, what terms, we inquire, could better correspond to the facts, than the collective phraseology of the New Testament does correspond to them? containing as it does,—1. A condensed antithetic summary of the future state, comprehending within it all diversities; as "life" and "punishment," salvation and perdition. 2. More numerous passages which describe, on the one part, the glories of the future life, and on the other part, the sufferings and final "death" or "destruction" of many. 3. Passages, scarcely less numerous, which predict the reconciliation or restoration at last of all those moral beings who shall survive destruction.

We repeat the question—If the New Testament be, or had been, designed to foreshow these several issues, what fitter language could have been employed? Not indeed to express these so exactly and definitely, that there should be no motive for research, and for careful comparison of Scripture with Scripture; but rather with so much indefiniteness as to produce earnestness and anxiety in the inquirer, yet with so much combined and reciprocally reflected light as might lead patient investigators to right conclusions.

We do not see how the language of the New Testament, taken as a whole, could have been more adapted to conduct us to such various conclusions, in a manner consistent with that solemn obscurity which, for deep reasons of divine wisdom, it might be still designed should involve this awful subject.

If, on the other hand, it had been designed expressly to teach and affirm the doctrine of unending evil, how easily might this have been expressed in terms not to be softened or evaded. If it had been declared that "the second death" is a living death, whose misery shall never end, the doctrine would have been in these few words unequivocally set forth. If, for example, the words which Philo Judaeus wrote concerning the punishment of Cain, had been written in the New Testament, with a plain reference to the existence of the wicked after death, " to live for ever in a dying state, and suffer in some sort an unending death,"\* then the meaning of the writer or writers would have been put out of all reasonable doubt.. And we think there is just cause to wonder (without any departure from humility and reverence) why, if that had been their meaning, then, on so unspeakably momentous a subject, those few decisive unquestionable words should not have been found in the New Testament.

At the same time restorations may be comparatively very rare, and be limited chiefly to cases among the heathen, or among persons in deep inevitable ignorance.

How obvious is the warning, that to reckon on restoration must be, of all self-deluding hazards, the most perilous. If there be any man who may look for irretrievable punishment and perdition, it must be he who " continues in sin" from the presumptuous hope of restoration, or even of extinction.

\* Professor Stuart quotes the text " the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God eternal life;" and then asks—" Is it in the power of language to convey a stronger impression of the retributions that will be made in the invisible world, than such an expression conveys?" (Essays, p. 104.) We answer, if by the retributions be meant endless sufferings (which is certainly the Professor's meaning in that phrase), then, unquestionably and manifestly, it is in the power of language (whether Hebrew or Greek) to convey a far stronger, and more definite and undeniable, affirmation of them, than either that or any other text of the New Testament has conveyed.

## 22 On The Methods Used By Some Divines For Mitigating The Difficulty As To Endless Evil.

IT deserves attention, in connection with this question, to what resources of extenuation some of those theologians have found themselves compelled or conducted, who have religiously shrunk from admitting variations in the continuance of evil. Saurin even lays down such extenuation as a rule. He says, " Take this principle" (i.e. the doctrine of degrees of punishment), " which Scripture established in the clearest manner; press home all its ' consequences; extend it as far as it can be carried; give scope even to your imagination, till the punishments which such and such persons suffer in hell are reduced to a degree that may serve to solve the difficulty of the doctrine of their eternity; whatever system ye adopt on this article, I will even venture to say, whatever difficulty ye may meet with in following it, it will be always more reasonable, I think, to make of one doctrine clearly revealed a clue to guide through the difficulties of another doctrine clearly revealed too, than rashly to deny the formal decisions of Scripture. I mean to say, it would be more rational to stretch the doctrine of degrees (of punishments) too far, if I may venture to speak so, than to deny that of their eternity."\* We have willingly let this good man and able writer speak for himself, against our conclusions. But we still hold that no reduction of the degree of future evil (so it remain evil at \* Sermon on Hell (Rev. sly. 11), vol. 3.p. 341; Robinson's translation.

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all) can "solve the difficulty" of its endlessness; and we also demur, on the grounds already discussed, to viewing the endlessness of evil as a "formal decision of Scripture."

For it is still to be asked to what point the punishments of some appear to have been reduced, in the estimate of that eloquent preacher. He writes, "There is an extreme difference between a Heathen and a Jew; there is an extreme distance between a Jew and a Christian; and a greater still between a Christian and a Heathen. There must therefore be as great a difference in the other life between the punishment of a Jew and that of a Pagan, between that of a Pagan and that of a Christian, as there is between the states in which God bath placed them on earth. Moreover, there is a very great difference between Jew and Jew, Pagan and Pagan, Christian and Christian. Consequently, when we say, a Pagan wise according to his own economy, and a Christian foolish according to his, are both in hell, we speak in a very vague and equivocal manner."\*

This may be quite true; but still we are led to inquire—does the esteemed writer thus afford any material aid towards "solving the difficulty?" In a popular discourse the use of the word "extreme," and its being followed by "greater still," need not be criticized. We may simply take these words to mean—what, no doubt, the author intended —that the difference between the punishment of the least culpable heathens, and of some who possess and abuse God's revealed truth, will be most exceedingly or immensely great: in other words, that the " Pagan wise according to his own economy" will undergo (if such a phrase be not contradictory) the minimum of endless evil. But, after all, the true question seems to be, would this minimum be such that destruction (extinction) would be preferable—that it would be felt better to be no more, than so to live for ever?

If it would be thus (and we know it is the case sometimes in the present life), then the endlessness even of such a state has in it the essential difficulty yet unsolved; for it has in it never-ending sin and never-ending pain.

If, on the other hand, it were better so to live for ever than, to cease to be, then the term " hell" (as meaning the Gehenna of the New Testament) could hardly be applied to such a state. That which was so much less unhappy than this life sometimes is, as to cause its perpetuity to be preferred (since very many, besides Job, have had to say here, " I would not live always"), that, we presume to think, could not fitly be called hell. If it were so called, it must be a hell without those torments which the fire and the worm represent; since it is not conceivable, nor indeed is ever supposed, that, under those unending inflictions, endless being would be chosen rather than destruction. So that on this supposition the advocate



of endless evil would have to recede from or modify a strict construction of Mark 9. 43, Matt. 13.41, 42, etc.,\* as regards the nature or intensity of suffering, as really as we do that of certain other texts as in respect of its duration. Indeed, Saurin by implication admits this, when he writes (in the way of censure), "we conceive of all the wicked as precipitated into the same gulf, loaded with the same chains, devoured by the same worm." To which it is fair to reply, your rigorous principle of interpretation, if carried out consistently, claims that you should conceive so. But since confessedly you can and ought to depart from it, you are not entitled to object to our construction as to the duration of evil, to which we think the whole tone of Scripture obliges, and which other particular texts are judged by us "in the clearest manner" to encourage.

In connection with this we remark, that similar views of the eminent Dr. Harris (although in themselves very just and interesting) fail, as we judge, to meet the argument of the late John Foster, to which they are appended and addressed.\* Dr. Harris points our attention to the phrase, "that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1.25); which he generalizes as applicable to every sinner's doom. We should willingly adopt the supposition that this intimates a plurality of abodes for those who unhappily come short of the "many mansions" of God's rest; inasmuch as some local classification according to degrees of guilt and evil would (as in earthly duration, so far as it is practicable there) be adapted to regulate the qualities and proportions of punishment; but still, if the foregoing reasoning upon Saurin's views be well grounded, then neither the notion of separate localities (if Dr. Harris intend that) nor "the minimum of punishment," of which he speaks, would, in our judgment, solve the grand moral difficulty of believing sin and woe to be permitted to endure for ever.

In Dr. Harris's opinions, that, as it regards the heathen, "the state of accountability may not be reached till a comparatively advanced period of youth, and that there may be many who will be reckoned with as to how little they have retrograded in evil, considering their disadvantages, we rejoice wholly to concur; (and should gladly extend them to those who, in lands called Christian., have been brought up in profound heathen ignorance.) still all these admissions or theories go to illustrate the point before us; namely, that, in order to palliate or solve the great difficulty concerning endless evil, theologians have been induced to expedients which deflect as widely as ours, though in another direction, from their own canon of strict interpretation.

But of the constraint or impulse on devout minds somehow to obviate that great difficulty we have, in some other writings, instances much more singular or peculiar. Archbishop King, in his book on the "Origin of Evil," has said, "Those evils which overbalance the desire and happiness of life put an end to life itself, and such objects as are hurtful to the sense at length destroy it. The same seems to hold good in thinking substances; viz., those things which affect the mind to a higher degree than it is able to bear may, in like manner, put an end to it.\* For they may be supposed either to drive us to madness, or so far to disorder the thinking faculty, as to make us think of nothing at all. Who can tell, then, whether the punishment of the wicked may not lead them into a kind of phrensy and madness? They may hug themselves in the cause the effects whereof they abhor—the more they labor under it, the more they embrace the cause of it, and will not suffer themselves to be anything but what they are. The divine goodness therefore is not to be charged with cruelty for letting them continue in that existence, though it be very miserable, when they themselves will not have it removed; or for not altering their condition, which they utterly refuse to have altered. 'Tis better for them indeed not to be, than to be; but only in the opinion of wise men, to which they do not assent."

This subtle but forced supposition very strangely represents the Holy and Almighty Being as prolonging endlessly the existence of the wicked in hell, because they insanely prefer such an existence to none; thus immortalizing sin and misery, because they will have it so, yet immortalizing them under "a kind of phrensy or madness." The archbishop's own hint of an alternative, namely, that suffering may "so disorder the thinking faculty as to make us think of nothing at all," might have led him to a somewhat different hypothesis; viz., that in order to perpetuate bare existence, it might please God to immortalize the wicked in a state of utter unconsciousness and mental inaction, thus avoiding that destruction which it is said would "revoke his own design;" and yet mercifully causing both sin and suffering to cease.

Nor has this way of escape or refuge from the great difficulty been unsought; for a divine of some note in another communion, Dr. Ridgley, supposed that those dying in infancy would continue to exist "in a state of everlasting insensibility."\*

Dr. Watts, after commending "the modesty and ingenuity with which Dr. Ridgley had represented this, sentiment," observes, "I cannot find it in the book of reason, nor conceive what end it can answer in divine providence, to continue so many millions of infant-souls in an eternal state of stupor. Is it agreeable to the conduct of divine wisdom, and to the government of a God, to maintain such an innumerable multitude of idiots, equal in number to almost all the rest of the human race, in a long endless duration, and to reign over such an immense nation of senseless and thoughtless immortals?"

He justly thinks it "much more natural and reasonable to suppose that God will deprive both the body and soul (i. e. of the infants of the wicked) of life, which Adam had. forfeited both for himself and them

Those remarks may be applied, in a great measure, to the hypothesis of Archbishop King, as well as to that of Dr. Ridgley.

Both have been mentioned, as well as the views of Saurin and of Dr. Harris, chiefly to show how devout and able writers, in consequence of their averseness—whether on philosophical or scriptural grounds—to the doctrine of "everlasting destruction" of the wicked, have been urged. into hypotheses which we think wholly untenable; and, in adopting them, have virtually deviated more from literal interpretation, than we do by admitting diversities in the continuance of sin and suffering. Are not the theories of endless existence in "phrensy," or of "everlasting insensibility or stupor," or of punishment which the subjects of it would prefer should continue without end, more alien from the ideas which Scripture gives us, than is our expectation that God will at last literally "destroy both body and soul in hell," or, as Justin Martyr expressed it, that impenitent souls "are punished, as long as for them both to be and to be punished God willed?"

That learned and pious defender of Christianity, the late Dr. O. Gregory, ventures to say, "The notion of annihilation, after a temporary punishment, has not the least foundation in Scripture, and is in itself too absurd to demand any specific reply;" but he assigns no shadow of reason for these bold assertions, and we discern none which is even plausible.

### 23 On The Silence Of The Apostles, Generally, As To Endless Evil.

IF it were the purpose of our blessed Savior to predict and affirm "infinite evil,"—and therefore, which none can doubt, that his apostles and their companions should as plainly do the same, how can we account for the fact that neither Luke nor Paul, neither Peter, John, nor James, have expressly announced that most appalling of doctrines, either in their epistles, or in any spoken words of theirs recorded in the Gospels or Acts of the Apostles, whether addressed to Jews or Gentiles? So that, if we possessed the whole New Testament, with the sole exceptions of Matthew's and Mark's gospels, we should have no color of clear evidence as to that doctrine; nothing certainly on which a solid plea for it could be founded. Yet Paul had said, in his touching address to the Ephesian elders, "I have kept back nothing that was profitable for you;" and again, "I am pure from the blood of all; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."

In almost all his fourteen epistles this apostle introduces severe denunciations against sin; yet nothing that we know of in all these can be supposed to affirm the doctrine of unending evil, unless it were the phrase "destruction everlasting" (2 Thess. 1.9), and "judgment everlasting" (Heb. 6.2), which, we have already shown, admit a different interpretation. The same absence of reference to the doctrine may be affirmed as to the epistles of Peter, John, and James, the three disciples who had been most intimate with their Lord, and were most zealously attached to his cause.

A few plain sentences might have stated and enforced the doctrine distinctly; and such a doctrine—so tremendously and incomparably momentous.

Is it supposable that, by the first and inspired teachers of Christian truth, it could have been "kept back," or even indirectly and dubiously presented? Surely, in the various records which we possess, it might have been expected frequently and impressively to recur. We have two discourses of Peter to the guilty Jews; one to Cornelius and his companions; addresses of Paul to the Jews of Antioch, to the people of Athens, to the elders of Ephesus, to the Jewish people and Sanhedrim, at the tribunal of Festus, and before the king Agrippa.

In his Epistle to the Romans (chap. 2 and 3.) he utters to the impenitent Jews severe threatening of divine judgment.

In that to the Hebrews (10.26-31) he expatiates on the sore punishment of apostasy; and through his other epistles there are interspersed solemn warnings to the un-repenting and ungodly; yet in no case do we find a clear unquestionable declaration by him of that doctrine which very many Christians deem so essential, and which assuredly, if it were known to be true, would claim the most full, and reiterated, and forcible announcement by those who devoted themselves to the spiritual good of men.

If it be said, as probably it will be—though, of course, quite conjecturally—no doubt the apostles did proclaim the unending misery of the wicked earnestly and often, we can only reply, how passing strange, if so, that in discourses and letters which were to be handed down to the church and to the world, as the authentic repository of Christian truth, that awful prospect of endless guilt and torment, which they had orally insisted on, should be nowhere plainly and explicitly announced by them.

### 24 On The Objection That, If This Doctrine Be Disproved, Other Fundamental Doctrines Must Be Renounced.

IT has been affirmed, but, as we think, most rashly, "if the Scriptures have not asserted the ENDLESS punishment of the wicked, neither have they asserted the ENDLESS happiness of the righteous; nor the ENDLESS glory and existence of the Godhead. The one is equally certain with the other. If we give up the one, we must, in order to be consistent, give up the other also. The criticism which would decide against the endless punishment of the wicked, must also, to be consistent, blast my hopes of eternal life, and cover the glories of the Godhead with everlasting darkness."

These are assertions which may alarm or perplex some minds: nevertheless it remains indubitable, that the sense of words is greatly influenced and regulated by the subject to which they are applied; and that the meaning, as applied to punishment, decides and infers nothing as to its meaning in connection either with "life" or with the "Godhead." It would be only carrying out the Professor's reasoning, to say that, because the phrase an "everlasting statute," is applied, in the Septuagint version of Exodus 27. 21, to the oil and lamp of the tabernacle; 28. 43, to the garments of Aaron and his sons; 29. 28, and Lev. 10.15, to the heave-offering; in Exodus 30.21, to their washings in the laver of brass; therefore, to be consistent, we must give up the revealed eternity of God, and the everlasting life of the redeemed.

Nay, it might be further added, that even if the word (annoy prove, as is alleged, the endless existence and consciousness both of the righteous and the wicked, it would not therefore prove the divine eternity; for a word fitly denoting a derived existence which lately began, and which is successive, cannot rightly or properly denote an un-derived existence which had no beginning, and is non successive. The latter is in reality a contrast to the former. It would also be an argument of the same kind, to say that the solemn words in Levit. 19.2, "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," must be "given up" as not affording proof of the holiness of God, and as not enjoining holiness on Israel, because (as Saurin remarks in his sermon on that text) "the original term is one of the most vague words in the Hebrew language. An appointment to offices the most noble and worthy, and an appointment to offices the most infamous, are alike expressed by it." He very rightly adds—and it is a rule of large application—"the nature of the subject to which it is applied, and not the force of the term, must direct us to determine its meaning." If no other text could convince us that such a rule is sometimes necessary, this one would compel us to it.

But, apart from these considerations, it is certain, that the existence, the self-existence, the sempiternity of God, is the one great truth which written revelation presupposes, and on which it can alone be founded. To the atheist, continuing such, its evidences are null, or inconclusive at the most.

St. Paul most plainly alleges the value of natural theology as the basis of proof, when he writes (Romans 1.20) concerning the heathen, "the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead;" and, in verse 23, he alludes to their belief of the "incorruptible God", whose glory they endeavored to debase by idolatries.

Dr. Cudworth has shown in detail, that the belief of a supreme self-existent Godhead (combined with that of subordinate divinities, who were the immediate objects of their worship) prevailed among the heathen; drawing his proofs both from the poets, the philosophers, and the people. But the Scripture proofs likewise of God's eternity, additional to those arising from the term in question, are clear and diverse. The venerated name Jehovah itself intimates self-existence. It is derived from that title which God proclaimed, "I am that I am—say unto Israel I am hath sent me unto you" (Exodus 3.14, 15). God is described (1 Tim. 1.17) as "the King of ages, immortal, or incorruptible; and again (6.16), "who only hath immortality (Malmo-tau)." He declares of Himself (Isaiah 44. 6, and 48.12): "I am the first and I am the last." (43.13:) "Before the day was, I am He." (Ps. 102. 27; comp. Heb. 1.12:) "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." (Ps. 90.4; comp. 2 Pet. 3.8:) "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;" and we read (Rev. 1.8), "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come." Such, too, is the solemn ascription and adoration by the celestial worshippers (Rev. 4. 8), "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

Are we then to "give up" the doctrine of God's self-existence and eternity, whether as believed antecedently, or as confirmed by his whole word, because the expression has diverse meanings, and, in fact, can in no other case denote a strict and proper eternity?

Again, as to the "life everlasting" of the saints, we assuredly feel under no necessity to "give up" that on the grounds which the learned Professor urged. The language of the New Testament concerning it is not couched in a single word or single form of phrase only, but is amply diversified. They are to seek (Rom. 2.7) "honor and incorruption." They contend (1 Cor. 9.25) for a "crown incorruptible; they serve that Savior (2 Tim. 1.10) "who made life and incorruption clear." Again (1 Cor. 15.53), "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal—immortality." We are assured by Christ (Luke 20.36), "Neither can they die anymore;" and again (John 10.28), "they shall never perish:" for, as it regards them (Rev. 21.4), "death shall be no more." So it is declared of Him who is the immortal "Head of the church and Savior of the body" (Rom. 6.9), "Christ being raised from the dead dies no more. Death hath no more dominion over Him." And thus is virtually announced, together with the deathless life of the Savior, the same deathless life of the saved: as it is elsewhere more explicitly; for we read (Heb. 7.16) that their Savior has the power of an endless life, or life indissoluble; and He has said (John 14.19), "Because I live, ye shall live also." Once more, in another apostle's words (1 Pet. 1.4), they are promised "an inheritance incorruptible and unfading."

Now, with this diversity and copiousness of proof, independently of the term altogether, for the everlasting life of the saints,—to say, that in order to be consistent, that hope must be given up, because we assign to that word a terminable import in reference to punishment, we regard as an assertion signally unworthy of the devout and diligent writer.

It will be accordant with the general title of this chapter, to notice here some observations of the late Dr. J. T. Gray, in a very able Essay, where he criticizes the late John Foster's remark, that orthodox teachers do not enough exert themselves in "expanding and aggravating the awful import of such a word" as eternity. He refers to Mr. Foster's own expedients, or "calculi of approximation;" and quotes his words: "the most stupendous of these measures of time would be still nothing to eternity."

Dr. Gray then proceeds to ask, "How could the evangelical doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement stand against such an 'aggravation' of infinity as is here recommended? Draw out, in equally extended particularity, the disproportion between the divine nature and the human; and what more improbable than such a contact of the two as the Christian Scriptures assert?" We answer, the process or effort proposed by that deep and eloquent thinker (although, for once, he did not make the happiest selection of a term in the word "aggravating") still is and must be a right one; since it is an attempt to aid and impress the mind in approaching that conception of the endless, which indeed it can never have, but of which it may discern the immensity incomparably more by such "calculi," than by the thought or utterance of a single word. If the doctrine or fact be true, its awful immeasurable importance should be attempted to be "sounded" or "fathomed" with the longest line our minds can produce; if, on the contrary, the fact, with regard to the duration of sin and conscious misery, be on various grounds doubtful, then it behoves us to employ the same sounding line, that we may be more aware of the dreadful unfathomable depth which we have questioned. But as to the query, how could the doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement "stand against" such an "aggravation of Infinity," we think the consequence thus suggested is altogether groundless. To believe in the "great—the infinite—"mystery of godliness," is to believe what manifestly and infinitely enhances and magnifies our conception of God's holiness, love, and condescension. But to believe "the mystery of iniquity" and misery to be never-ending, would be to believe what, for us, must fearfully shock and loosen, as with a great earthquake, the otherwise immutable foundations of God's goodness or power. The several objects of thought thus brought into connection by the querist are, instead of being parallels, contrasts. The one is an infinite act of holy, saving, self-humbling love. The other would be a permission and perpetuation of unending guilt and woe and hatred. Would the excellent author—who now, like the greater mind whom he criticized, knows unspeakably more than we do on these lofty themes—have said, on more mature reflection, that because we cannot admit the endless guilt and woe and hatred, especially as coexistent and consistent with the Perfect Holiness, Power, and Love, therefore we ought, logically, to refuse or hesitate to believe the grand manifestation of these latter?—that because we try to explore, and are compelled to recoil from, the inconceivable perpetuation of Evil through the abysses of a coming eternity, therefore we must disbelieve or doubt the Infinitude of Holy Mercy, bending from the eternity which it inhabited, to embrace and snatch from ruin the feeble spirits, which have wandered, like lost atoms, from its sphere and from its bliss?

## 25 On The Objection That The Doctrine We Question Is Closely Linked With That Of The Atonement.

AN American divine, Dr. Stephen West, in the preface to his work entitled "The Scripture Doctrine of Atonement," affirms that this doctrine "evidently implies the eternity of punishment;" and remarks, "if the moral law will admit penitents to favor without any atonement, it will hardly be believed that the disposition [in the Governor of the world which such a law, so constructed and so understood, will naturally exhibit, can ever admit of his inflicting eternal torments on any of his creatures. For if the offence of the sinner be no greater in the view of God, than may be overlooked merely upon the consideration of his repentance, and not only wholly overlooked, but the transgressor be treated with every mark of friendship and favor, who will believe that there is displeasure enough existing in the divine mind ever to inflict eternal torments? For God to make such a distinction between one who confessedly spends this short life chiefly in sin, and one who spends it wholly so, and that, too, when the crimes of the former, as the case may be, and many times in fact is, greatly exceed those of the latter, naturally surpasses all belief." This is to say, in other words, "eternal torment" or "infinite evil" would be wholly incredible, but for that Christianity—that gospel, which fully manifests God's infinite holiness and love; but now that we have the full manifestation of these, and can say, "herein is love," etc., thus are everlasting sin and misery made credible, and requisite to be believed, we are bound to believe in unending evil and in God's infinite love reciprocally, in order that we may be able to believe either; or at least to believe in "eternal torment," in order that we may not disbelieve or doubt the eternal and atoning love of Him who ordains and perpetuates its infliction.

This astounding argument involves a very remarkable concession; which claims to be attentively regarded. It admits and even affirms that, without the sacrificial Atonement of God's dear Son, the fact of eternal torments ("infinite evil") would be not credible; and that thus, by his advent—concerning whom the angel said, "Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people"—there was in effect first revealed, and alone made credible, the prospect of never-ending sin and misery for a vast portion of mankind.

Thus God's "unspeakable gift,"—the unparalleled proof and display of his holiness and grace,—is held to render the perpetuation and augmentation of sin and suffering to infinity a matter of sure belief; whereas, without that supreme act of divine sanctity and loving-kindness, expressly directed against sin and misery, and "to destroy the works of the devil," that very doctrine, it is admitted, would "surpass all belief." Or it may be put thus—the sacrifice of Christ is held to demonstrate transcendently that God is all-holy, and that God is Love; but yet to afford also the sole demonstration that God will uphold the desperately and increasingly guilty and wretched in an existence without end.

A somewhat similar notion, though rather implied than expressed, is discoverable in the reasoning of Dr. Gray, already quoted; but it is more apparent when he afterwards writes, "The same sort of mystery, we perceive, attaches to the theory of the divine expiation for sin, as to that of the divine punishment of it. To the wonders of God's judgments we oppose therefore the wonders of his grace. Bring us the mind which can adequately estimate the degree, the amount (John 3.16) of God's love towards the sinner, and to that mind alone will we entrust the estimation of his displeasure against sin."

It seems here all along implied, that the mysteries are alike incomprehensible. If you stumble at the one, you may equally do so at the other. But, whether this be implied or not, we must submit some reply to the closing remark concerning God's "displeasure against sin;" by asking—whether is it a greater proof of displeasure against sin, first severely to punish, and then ultimately and utterly destroy it, or, to uphold the wretched existence of those in whom it inheres, and permit its active malignity (at least internally) forever?

To use an illustration—though all such must be very defective—we may ask, which would be the greater proof of a wise and good man's indignation or displeasure against the venom of a serpent—that he should crush and destroy it, or, that he should keep it in life with its venom unchangeably malignant? Further, imagine a fallen human soul in the serpent, and that the venom therefore truly appertained to it, we then judge that the wise and good man might justly, and mercifully on the whole, protract awhile the crushed reptile's life in suffering, as a warning to other creatures likely to grow as noxious; but we still ask, would righteous hatred of the evil poison be more evinced by immortalizing the creature and its fatal venom, or letting these be immortal, than by causing both the serpent and the poison to vanish out of existence?

Bishop Pearson expresses a view which is akin to the above cited, saying, " This belief is necessary to teach us to make a fit estimate of the price of Christ's blood, to value sufficiently the work of our redemption, to acknowledge and admire the love of God to us in Christ. "For he which believeth not the eternity of torments to come, can never sufficiently value that ransom by which we are redeemed from them, or be proportionately thankful to his Redeemer, by whose intervention we have escaped them. Whereas he who is sensible of the loss of heaven, and the everlasting privation of the presence of God, of the torments of fire, the company of the devil and his angels, the vials of the wrath of an angry and never to be appeased God, and hopes to escape all these by virtue of the death of his Redeemer, cannot but highly value the price of that blood, and be proportionably thankful for so plenteous a redemption."

We would respect and love sincere and earnest Christians, whatever be their peculiar opinions; but we do not understand, much less participate, the mental or moral constitution of those divines who can judge the doctrine of Atonement to be thus proved, corroborated, or exalted.

To our apprehension it is, on the contrary, most manifest, that the amazing incarnation, self-humiliation, and suffering of God's own Son become the more credible in proportion to the extended efficacy of their results.

Truly, a strange perversion or paradox would it be (as our faculties are constituted) to suppose that if the fruit of the Atonement should prove to be ultimately the total extinction of that sin which God " abominates," and of that misery in which He "hath no pleasure,"—therefore must the Atonement be deemed the less credible and sure, the less needful and indispensable, the less godlike and glorious.

If the heaven-descended "Savior of the world" shall, in a large sense, "justify many,"—if He " gave Himself a ransom for all," and will "draw all" unto Him, if "where sin abounded, grace shall much more abound,"—if his divine work of love have made known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom and compassion of our God—if it thus exert conservative or rescuing influences even in other realms of creation, if, in relation to our fallen race, it at once exalt and perfect and. beatify the saved, and abate in degree or duration the sinfulness and misery of the lost, just in the proportion of these beneficent and godlike triumphs will it to us appear credible; as being gloriously commensurate with "the kindness and philanthropy (Tit. 3.4) of our Savior God."

We are conscious that for us (and are sometimes tempted to believe that for us alone) this Atonement shines forth in all the fulness of its adorable and impelling grandeur, the plenary message of victorious love and of super\_ abounding grace; softening the dreadful woes and abridging the terrible criminality of the unsaved, restoring some before the great final day, as well as perfecting in immediate holiness the spirits of the just; and in its last celestial triumph bringing all surviving moral beings into devout, and loving, and joyful subjection unto Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.

We discern in it an efficacy comporting with the majesty and greatness of its Author and Finisher: touching all creatures with the blessed scepter of its almightiness, upholding the sanctity and bliss of angels in their first estate, lightening even the fetters of despair, extinguishing at last the being of the despairing, while exulting in the blissful survivorship of the " great multitude " of the saved. For us the Lord of Love, the Destroyer of evil, triumphs at once in his all-merciful salvation, all-merciful restoration, merciful conservation, just and merciful destruction.

Nothing, on the other hand, could so impugn, if not subvert, for us, the credibility of the Atonement, as to contend that, notwithstanding so divine and surpassing an intervention, so wondrous an enterprise of omnipotent Love, " infinite evil" will still be permitted to subsist; that, instead of Love going forth in resistless sovereignty " conquering and to conquer," destroying the works of the great enemy, and subjecting to its own blessed sway all that shall ultimately survive in the universe, there shall still remain a mass of enmity, revolt, and wretchedness, which, so far from being extinguished or allayed, shall be unendingly, immeasurably deepened and prolonged.

#### 26 On The Objection That Our Doctrine Lulls Men With A Delusive Hope.

THE objection most usually and strongly urged to these milder and more cheering views of the Christian revelation is, that, by ingenious reasonings against the plain terms of Scripture, they palliate " the terror of the Lord,"\* prophesy smooth things to the unconverted, and lull the impenitent with a delusive hope of the ultimate destruction of being, or the final recovery of happiness.

These are grave charges, and would, if well founded, be painful consequences, which we should deprecate quite as truly as the objector. They tend to excite a degree of apprehensiveness and hesitation while advocating these views, which we believe to be scriptural. But we reply to ourselves—which is more material to our mental tranquility than replying to opponents—the fear -which shall operate efficaciously on the human mind must be the fear of what is felt to be at the least credible; or even. probable, and in some measure certain.

Knowing, on the contrary, as we do, that there prevails a widely diffused suspicion and doubt (not to say unbelief, -though that also is frequent) with regard to the very basis of Christianity and of all religion, can we question that there must be a yet wider and far deeper incredulity in regard to the appalling dogma which has been now discussed? And is it not certain, that in very many thoughtful minds, by pressing its acceptance as a necessary tenet, the whole foundation of faith is shaken and endangered? Assuredly there is a growing number of reflective persons, in all ranks of society, who have a strong, solemn, ineradicable persuasion that the doctrine of never-ending evil cannot be reconciled with the moral perfections of Deity; and it is no less sure that the faith of these in Christianity must, to say the least, be weakened, if they feel bound to regard that doctrine as an essential integral part of the religion. If indeed they be of a cautious, humble, and reverent spirit, they may escape "shipwreck, concerning the faith," by only deeming it more probable, as we do, that a very few phrases have been misinterpreted, than that so tremendous and incredible a doctrine is really designed to be propounded in the Christian Scriptures.

But it is too likely that the theological authorities and leaders, whom these persons have been taught to esteem, still urge and insist on this doctrine as so fundamental, that they who renounce it are, if not heretics, on the high road of heresy; for that, with this, the revealed scheme of redemption must stand or fall.

What then will follow? Either they are impelled to the summary conclusion, it is more probable that Christianity is a delusion than that this dogma is a truth—or, if they prize revealed hopes too much entirely to abandon them, they will at least be prompted to a very material change of views—to those very lax notions of inspiration, or perhaps to those mythical theories, which are so current in our day. A writer, whose knowledge of society cannot but give weight to his averment, pronounces " the opinion of the endless duration of evil to be among the most effective of all the causes which are at present inducing among us that virtual abandonment of Christianity, which assigns a mythic sense to almost every part of the sacred oracles."

A similar statement had been made long before, in an age when the modes of seduction to unbelief were perhaps less subtle, less vaguely and refinedly insidious, than they have now become. " These," wrote Dr. Jortin, "are doctrines which have unhappily helped to propagate atheism or deism, and have made many a man say to himself—if this be Christianity, let my soul be with the philosophers."

It has been remarked, on the other hand, by a defender of the doctrine of endless evil, " Some controvertists have urged, that so long as the infidel identified it with the Christian faith, he would persist in his disbelief. We affirm, from no narrow observation, from no slight experience, that every attempt to cast it off he (the infidel) regards as a sorry shift, an ignoble evasion. He can read the doctrine in Christianity, if others cannot."

No doubt, this is often the fact. But wherefore? because it is the instinctive policy of unbelievers to " read in Christianity," or rather to fasten upon it, and bring forward, as an inseparable part of it, whatever they conceive (rightly or wrongly) tends to make it incredible or odious.

Nothing, except this their spirit and tactic, is to be inferred from their suffrages on behalf of the doctrine in question; and the implied praise of their right-mindedness, as to this particular point, seems wholly misplaced. It either shows a short-sighted forgetfulness of the infidel's temper and motive, or it is leaning on a treacherous advocacy, which, duly weighed, is worth less than naught.

We waive the question, because it has not been raised by us, whether that doctrine leads infidels to "persist in disbelief;" though we assuredly believe it does. There are, no doubt, several concurring causes which lead them so to persist.

We are quite persuaded, however, of what has been argued already, namely, that it tends to generate skepticism in those who are not infidels, but sincere inquirers; to shake the faith of thoughtful Christians, and in many cases to unsettle, if not destroy, belief, by the imposition of that as vital and essential to Christianity, from which the mind recoils as incredible. We think the fear of translation and of harm from publicity, which Dr. Thomas Burnet expressed, when he wrote on this subject in Latin, was entirely erroneous in his own age, and still more would be so in ours.

When we have mythical views of Scripture, and pantheistic philosophisms, and antinomian perversions, and every form of error, from Mormonite fanaticism to downright atheism, scattered through cheap literature, and in some shape coming under the notice even of many who would anxiously shun them, it surely need not be apprehended that a serious and reverential investigation of Scripture doctrines and Scripture language, grounded on a steadfast adherence to revealed truth, can increase the dangers which in so many forms are assailing the foundations of faith. On the contrary, it is our confident hope that such inquiry, conducted in a right spirit, is a main defense against those dangers.

#### 27 On The Ill Effect Of Finding The Doctrine Of Endless Evil Held By Spiritual Guides.

BUT, besides all this, we know that the mere fact of this doctrine having been and still being pleaded for by many highly esteemed preachers and writers, has shaken that confidence in their judgment, lowered that high appreciation of their mental soberness and enlargement, which would otherwise have conduced to corroborate our general faith.

For, undoubtedly, belief in religion, both natural and revealed, is strengthened, even in minds highly intelligent, by the fact that other minds of yet higher capacity and power have closely scrutinized and firmly believed those most momentous truths; and it is also strengthened, in the great mass of believers, by a persuasion of the same scrutiny and the same belief on the part of the foremost teachers of religion generally. Else to what purpose do the advocates of Christianity so often and studiously remind us, that it has been embraced by minds distinguished for intellect, probity, and learning?

But then if some of these superior minds are found by us to maintain, as fundamental, a tenet which we cannot but judge incredible and unwarranted, inevitably the authority of those minds will have a greatly diminished influence in confirming our general faith. Few indeed may at all suspect that the tenet has been professed by them insincerely; but many will suspect that the very devoutness of those good and gifted men—their deep and self-renouncing veneration for the unsearchableness and sovereignty of God, and their self-imposed adhesion to interpretations which their forefathers adopted—has made them bow to an opinion which right reason and enlightened criticism combine to explode.

And if they have thus been governed in a question so solemnly important, so deeply affecting our conceptions of the divine attributes and government; of what authority—it will unavoidably be asked—are their conclusions as to other points?

How shall the reasoning or the belief of minds so molded—eminent as they may otherwise be in piety and talent—afford confirmation of real value to the truth of any doctrines which they espouse?

True, the other reasonings and conclusions of these minds ought to retain just that weight which they intrinsically possess; but it is impossible that they should—as it respects us and many more—possess or acquire the added weight which they would have derived from the mental and moral superiority of their authors, if they had not contended for this one dogma, which we cannot but deem manifestly untenable.

The impression on our minds, from their advocacy of what we account a capital error, especially when pleaded for, as it sometimes is, with uncharitable harshness, cannot but subtract very materially from the support which those devout and learned men would afford by their general researches and convictions to the great doctrines of religious truth.

There have indeed been and still are those who, while acceding themselves to the doctrine of interminable evil, have conceded, in a tolerant spirit, full liberty of judgment in regard to it. The late distinguished Robert Hall wrote, as his opinion to a doubting correspondent, that "the doctrine is not an essential article of faith, nor is the belief of it ever proposed as a term of salvation;" that "if we really flee from the wrath to come, by truly repenting of our sins, and laying hold of the mercy of God through Christ by a lively faith, our salvation is perfectly secure, whichever hypothesis we embrace on this most mysterious subject. The evidence accompanying the popular interpretation is by no means to be compared to that which establishes our common Christianity."

These admissions are honorable to the writer's judgment and charity, and have some tendency to abate, as it respects him, the impression of which we have been treating; still, when he writes in the same letter, "for my own part, I acquiesce in the usual and popular interpretation," there remains on our minds a portion of that impression which detracts from our deference towards even so good and great a man's opinions, and from the authority that would else accompany his warm adherence to evangelical truth.

#### 28 On Some Practical Results Which Should Follow From The Reception Of The "Popular" Doctrine.

IT seems to us that the practical consequences which might naturally arise from the doctrine of never-ending evil, if it were really and firmly believed, would be such as to militate against the dictates both of right reason and of sound and pure Christianity. We have heard of instances where persons, conscious of strong hereditary predisposition to mental derangement, have accounted celibacy therefore, for themselves, a sacred duty, and have through life acted upon that conviction, with a self-denial which one cannot but think in their case right-minded and laudable. But it appears certain that the great liability of human beings universally to a never-ending existence in sin and misery, would, if believed, be a much stronger argument for adopting universally the principle of the "unlawfulness of marriage," as held by a transatlantic sect.

At least, under the immeasurable and terrific hazard which, if that doctrine were true and ascertained, would be obviously involved in the birth of infants, we see it not possible that a woman could "remember no more the anguish, for joy that a human being was born into the world." The risk of its suffering endless moral and penal evil, would be, in our view, a far greater reason for pain and dread, than the very uncertain hope of its endless welfare could be for joy. The negation or non-existence of endless good is a mere and absolute nonentity or nothing; while the positive augmentation of the sum of guilt and woe everlastingly, is a possibility which might harrow up even a savage mother's heart. Nor is it, we believe, in reality and practically, a possibility which is often, if ever, contemplated.

It is true, we find in one of the defenses of the popular doctrine, already referred to, the following remarkable passage:—"All who are converted, shall, by a persevering grace, be saved. They shall never perish. What system can sum up so many? Ours are no niggard views. Nor do we hesitate to avow the inconceivable preponderance of this aggregate over the lost. We do not think that it is an accidental description of the great multitude' that 'no one can number them;' and while we read no such description of hell, we feel that it would be unlike the Book and the Gospel of God. We have strong large premises to bear out our conclusion. These we do not urge."

In that conclusion we, in reading it, have truly rejoiced. It is in fine contrast with the topic of Massillon, which so electrified an auditory that were perhaps little the better for his eloquence, "the small number of the elect." But we presume that the "large premises" must be found in the expectation of coming and successive ages, when the message of divine truth and grace shall be incomparably more effectual to convert and to save. We deny not such a probability, but hail it and pray for it as the most blessed of changes. Yet far extended into futurity must be the period of such successes, if it shall be long enough to overbalance the apparent failures of ages past and of the present time.

With respect to these, the late Dr. Chalmers wrote, "The converts, in respect of the whole auditory, may constitute a very little flock. As the fruit of the labor of a lengthened incumbency, all that a most assiduous pastor shall leave behind him may be a mere fraction—turned through his means to genuine faith and discipleship." He terms "spiritual renovation an event of exceeding rarity," and speaks of the "quantity of Christian good that is done," as "a very handful out of the untouched mass," and of "the soundest theologians," as "aware of the extreme paucity of conversion." We hope and believe that this is too strongly stated; but taking it even with large allowance, it will still leave a dark view of present facts. And apart from any such estimates by others, if as Christians we look upon society, meditating the gross and palpable contaminations to which most in the great masses of mankind are exposed, and reflecting on the enticements to unbelief and dissipation for those whose position seems more favored, we cannot but feel that the risk of men's leading and continuing an non devout, unspiritual, and im-moral life is lamentably great; and if never-ending evil is to be the terrible result, we are brought back to the sad inference that it is impossible for Christian parents to rejoice, with so tremendous a hazard imminent on the futurity of the dearest.

Neither do we understand how the zealous believers in never-ending evil (especially those who have employed their thoughts in arguing for it, and consequently may be supposed to have entered its abysses) have ever been able to divert their minds from such an appalling prospect: how Carey could find heart to arrange a botanic garden, or Mr. Ruskin to study the refinements of architecture and painting, or William Cowper to translate the Iliad and Odyssey. A devout Christian missionary to the Hindoos was once heard by us to say, that except he had believed in the endless misery of the idolatrous heathen, he would not have commenced or prosecuted his work. If he would have been deterred because the object would not then have been felt vast and overwhelming enough to engage or stimulate his benevolence, this, as we conceive, betrayed a strangely self-exalting requirement of motive or impulse.

Angels are content "to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation."

Sydenham remained in London during the great plague, unshrinkingly facing that peril, in the persevering effort to save men from bodily death. Howard exposed and sacrificed his life in attempts to lessen the temporal miseries of the imprisoned.

To be instrumental in rescuing men from the second death, and exalting them to endless life, one would think an office which no man or angel need wish further to magnify; which might satisfy the largest aim of charitable ambition.

But if that good man meant, that could he have believed the sins and pains of unconverted heathens terminable, he would not then have drawn on them the frightful hazard of rejecting the gospel, and so rendering them interminable, this would involve the belief that the "Savior of the world," by commanding his "glad tidings to be preached to every creature," gave rise not only to endless felicities, but withal to endless additions of guilt and torment.

Such a belief, it seems to us, instead of enkindling the zeal of Christians for the conversion of idolaters, might rather lead them to regard that primitive commission as temporary, and to refrain from efforts whose defeat would render them not merely "a savor of death unto death," but a cause or instrument of undying anguish.

On the other hand, the "popular" belief which zealous missionaries commonly profess, namely, the never-ending misery of all unconverted persons, whether they have heard the gospel or not, would to our minds operate as a dark temptation to gloomy and despondent inaction. We should be impelled to say—in mournful wonder, if not in doubting bitterness—if He of whom it is proclaimed that He alone is Good, will permit evil and misery to subsist and accumulate to infinity, why should his feeble creature weakly interpose? — why not rather acquiesce in the fearful mysterious doom which revelation hath announced, and which the only wise God prevents not!

"If the eternal misery" (i.e. the endless sinning and suffering) "of a certain number can be rendered conducive to a greater amount of good, in relation to the universe at large, than any other plan of action, then the attribute of goodness requires it."

Such was the hypothetical argument of a good and great man in defense of the doctrine of endless evil. But we should be sorely tempted to subjoin, if divine goodness requires it, why should poor human goodness labor to contravene or diminish it? We grant that such reasonings or sentiments might be wrong, fallacious, presumptuous: we may be reminded, with truth, that they could also be carried out, in the necessitarian spirit, to excuse indifference towards every evil which God permits and tolerates, and thus might have paralyzed or stayed those noble efforts already referred to, of Sydenham or Florence Nightingale, of Wilberforce or Clarkson, of Howard or Shaftesbury. But still, in proportion as the evil which divine Providence will permit is held to be immense and unbounded, augmenting and unending, will human endeavors to abate it, according to our feelings and judgment, be the more sorely discouraged.

The great and happy prompting to missionary labors (abroad or at home) would in our minds be—the belief, here defended, that evil has its bounds; that it will be wholly extinguished at length; that, on whatever shall "never perish," the amplitude of love's victory will be at last complete. It is in this persuasion that we could go to the school, or to the congregation, or to heathens by the wayside, feeling ourselves emphatically "workers together with God;" instruments of an almighty beneficence and mercy which can have no limit.

### 29 On Certain Theological Statements Which Time Has Modified.

IT will be remembered that in foregoing chapters we examined certain rules laid down for the interpretation of Scripture; and then showed, as we think beyond question, that they cannot be consistently maintained, and do not admit of strict application to our present subject.

Nevertheless, after having first insisted on the great moral argument from the perfections of God, as revealed to us, we did not shun the philological inquiry; but gave it pretty full and distinct consideration.

Yet, should the conclusions to which that inquiry brought us appear to some, as we have no doubt they will, forced or infirm, or, at the best, not sure, then must we revert to that great moral argument, and contend that here, as in not a few other instances, reverence for the divine perfection demands that we be guided not by the letter, but by the spirit of God's word.

On the whole matter it may be added, even before that renewed and more careful research which has been made into the testimony of Scripture, we held it presumptuous, in our own case (for we charge nothing on others), to impute to the Perfect Being the endless perpetuation, even permissively, of moral and penal evil. But since that research, we should account it yet more so. For seeing as we have done the diversity of texts which bear upon this subject, and the manner which they ought to modify each other, we still the more strongly judge that it would be culpable in us to teach or to believe that evil shall have no termination, and shall, as by necessity it then must, endlessly accumulate.

If, after such research, we should do this, it would be in face, or in the remembrance, of many passages of God's word, which, in our judgment, must be taken to affirm that evil shall be ultimately destroyed, and that all who then survive shall be brought into willing and filial subjection, and happy allegiance to Himself.

We do not adopt or vindicate the theory of "development" introduced by divines of a very different school, nor are we neologians, in the sense of admitting or supposing that great and real novelties of doctrine can be elicited from the New Testament by any sober and devout inquirers.

Yet it cannot, we conceive, be disputed that some opinions, or interpretations, of former days, would not be urged or defended by judicious divines in our own. We might speak of those which astronomical and geological science have modified. But it is closer to our immediate topic if we refer to such as concern matters moral and punitive. Few, we presume, would now advance this proposition: "If you transgress the law once in all your life, and that only in one thought, you are thereby become subject to the curse, which, as you have heard, is eternal damnation in hell;" and "forasmuch as the offence is always multiplied according to the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, man's offence must needs be an infinite offence, and the punishment must needs be infinite."

Fewer still, we suppose, would publish a meditation thus beginning: "O wretched man, where shall I begin to describe thine endless misery, who art condemned as soon as conceived; and adjudged to eternal death before thou wast born to a temporal life? (datnatus antequam natus)—Augustin."

Nor do we apprehend that, in regard to the intensity of future suffering, such a statement would be now given or even defended as Dr. T. Burnet quotes from an unnamed writer of a former age:—"If all the men born from Adam to this day, and to be born henceforward, should live to the last day; and all the blades of grass which ever sprang up were men; and if they should share equally one pain which the soul suffers for one mortal sin in hell, so that to each one should be given an equal portion of that pain, then would each particle of that pain for each one man be greater than all the torments which all the holy martyrs, and all robbers, and criminals have ever suffered." "Thus he," says Dr. Burnet. "And if to these most cruel pains you add eternity, you will fill up all the parts, numbers, modes of inhumanity."

Neither do we expect that any, even of the American divines, would now borrow the language of an Englishman (1723) who writes: "In hell—one or two attributes are usually supposed to bear sway; but many perfections shall there be displayed and exalted. His power; in sustaining the criminals amidst the fire of his wrath. He could 'easily consume them to annihilation; but He will uphold and harden them, to be always in a destruction, that will never be finished. His grandeur—so high and great, so incomparably supreme is He, that ten thousand times ten thousand most miserably tormented spirits shall not, in the least, be pitied or regarded by Him to all eternity; ten thousand times ten thousand most doleful sighs and shrieks, and groans, and yelling, and roaring, and howling, under the most exquisite torture and anguish of spirit, shall not meet with the least pity, compassion, or relenting unto all eternity. O the dignity of that Being, that has an everlasting hell to be the representation or the triumph of his grandeur! There He rides in magnificent though gloomy state; and marches over a world of damned heads, with most non commiserating disregard and disdain. Over the gates of hell may be written, Holy and reverend is his name! ' There He is tremendously aggrandized."

Further, we do not suppose that very many Christian teachers would now teach as Augustine did when he wrote, "It may therefore be rightly said, that little ones departing from the body without baptism will be in the mildest damnation of all. Yet lie greatly deceives and is deceived who preaches that they will not be in damnation; since the apostle saith, Judgment was by one to condemnation,' and a little after, by the offence of one upon all men to condemnation.' "

It is observable that these interpretations have been gradually modified or renounced, in some correspondence or proportion to the advancement of milder and more equitable maxims and practices in human law and government. The state of public opinion relatively to political justice and mercy, as well as our own special temperament, will in some measure affect our conclusions on higher and abstruse matters. When the doctrine of "infinite evil" was perhaps rarely questioned, the judicial severities of Christendom were such as our sense of equity and humanity would now repudiate. Servetus was burned at the stake. Damien was dreadfully and variously tortured, and then pulled asunder by horses. Whereas Pianori is dispatched by the instantaneous guillotine. The forger and other offenders, who were punished capitally, now undergo a milder sentence. And men's estimates of human justice will necessarily have some influence on their construction of the divine threatening. Not that they will (if right-minded) either alter God's word, or refine away its substantial import; but their interpretation will be rightly influenced by that practical view of justice and mercy to which the age has attained, and to which, we ought to add, a right view of the spirit of Christ's gospel has conducted it.

### 30 On The Opinions Of Some Early Christians.

STILL, in fact, although our construction of Scripture on this subject differ from that of the "schoolmen," and also from that of the Puritans, yet is it really anything but novel. It is rather a return to the opinions of not a few Christian teachers of the early ages. These views were held, under various modifications, but all involving a non-belief, or at least non-assertion, of the doctrine of infinite evil, not only by Origen, but by Justin Martyr, who wrote, "It is not proper to call the soul immortal," p. 147—meaning, not necessarily or universally. "Those souls which are worthy to appear before God, die no more; but these are punished as long as God wills for them to exist and to be punished," p. 149. So Irenaeus: "As the heavens, the sun, the moon, and the stars were made, when before they were not, and continue through long periods, according to the will of God, so judging



concerning souls and spirits, and, indeed, concerning all things that are made, one would in no degree err; for all things which are made have a beginning of their creation, but continue as long as God wills them both to be, and to continue. For life is not from us, nor from our nature, but is given according to the grace of God; and so, he that duly keeps the gift of life, and offers thanks to Him who bestowed it, shall receive length of days for ever and ever; but he who casts it away, and is ungrateful to his Maker for being made, and knows not Him who bestows it, he deprives himself of continuance for ever and ever."

Arnobius wrote, the souls of the condemned "lie (in torments), and being reduced to naught, vanish in the frustration of perpetual destruction. For they are of middle quality, as is learned from the authority of Christ, and may be destroyed, if they ignore the God of life, or be freed from exile, if they have attended to his threatening and his favors. This is the true death of man; this which makes nothing to remain; for that death which is seen is the severance of souls from bodies, not the extreme end of abolition. This, I say, is man's true death, when souls ignorant of God are consumed by torment of very long duration in fierce fire."

Jerome, on Isaiah 56.24, says, "Moreover, they who maintain that punishments will at some time end, and, although after long periods, torments will have a termination, use these testimonies;" and then, having given the passages which seem to favor that opinion, he adds these words: "All which they unfold or adduce, wishing to maintain that, after anguish and torments, reliefs are to come, which are now to be hidden from those to whom fear is salutary, that by terror of punishment they may desist from sin; which question we ought to leave to the knowledge of God alone; of whom not only the mercies but the dreadful inflictions are justly weighed, and He knows whom, in what manner, and how long He ought to condemn." He had said something of like purport on Isaiah 24, near the end: "It is to be known that human frailty cannot know the judgment of God, nor decide concerning the magnitude and measure of penalties; which is left to the will of God."

Broughton very properly asks, after quoting those last words—"Would Jerome have said this, had he believed the eternity of hell torments."

Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. 40, p. 665), after having spoken of the eternal punishments of the condemned in the common manner, doubtingly, and as if correcting himself, subjoins, "Unless one please here also to understand this in a more philanthropic sense, and more worthily of the Punisher;' intimating that it is more humane and more divine to moderate these punishments. When Nilus, disciple of Chrysostom, and a martyr, noticed this place of Nazianzen, he inferred from it that in those times the dogma of the eternity of punishments had been doubted of, and disputed by the fathers; "for Nazianzen," says he, "permits those who will, to regard that fire in a milder or more philanthropic sense."

Gregory Nyssen wrote, "Since it needs that from such (a soul) the stains in its nature, by sins, be by some healing process removed, on this account, in the present life, the medicine of virtue has been applied for the cure - of such wounds; but if it remains unhealed, then, in the life after this, the healing is dispensed. But as there are differences in sufferings of the body, of which some admit cure with more ease, some with more difficulty, in which amputations and cauterizes, and bitter drugs are employed for the removal of the disease which assails the body, in some such way the subsequent judgment is announced for healing the disorders of the soul; which to the more loose or proud is a menace, and a dismal resurrection, that by fear of the retribution of sufferings, we might be made prudent as to the flight from wickedness; but to the more wise there is believed to be cure and healing from God, who recalls his own creature to that grace which it had at the beginning."\* Elsewhere the same father wrote, "But his aim (namely, that of God) is one—that of perfecting by some means in every man all the fulness of our nature; these indeed at once already in this life being purified from wickedness, those being healed subsequently by fire in fitting periods, and thus to all those who have not made a right estimate of good and evil in the life which is here, adding the (final) communication of that good which is in Him."

### 31 On The Retrospect Of The Whole.

THESE citations have been made, not from great deference for the opinions of the "fathers," \* but to show that a non-reception of the doctrine of infinite evil cannot be regarded as a modern innovation; since we have instances of it among Christians of the first ages. Their authority is not great, for they held other opinions, which we can no way receive. The last quoted, for example, Gregory of Nyssa, appears to have held transubstantiation. Still we are free to acknowledge, that we could less unwillingly, because with less pain to conscience or the moral sense, accept the dogma of transubstantiation than that of "infinite evil."

That dogma, no doubt, contradicts the senses, and is moreover at variance with reason and all our conceptions of possibility. But it does not infringe or weaken the belief of the moral perfection of God. On the contrary, were it credible, it would rather enhance our estimation of divine love and condescension; and certainly would enlarge the sphere or idea of divine Omnipotence; for it would imply a triumph over even the contradictory and impossible. Whereas it appears to us that the theory of never-ending evil—whether as chosen, or permitted to be perpetual by the Supreme Being, or whether as in itself inevitable, and not controllable by Him, except at the cost of an infinite good—would involve inferences most formidable to a belief of the moral perfection and omnipotence of God; more formidable, as we conceive, than even the creed of ancient Parsism, in its best shape (already referred to \*), and of the Gnostics and Manicheans, which was partially grafted upon it. Because in maintaining the existence of antagonistic and rival principles of good and evil (Ormuzd and Ahriman), these ancient speculatists, or many of them, held those rival powers to be themselves subordinate; ultimately to be controlled by the supreme and perfect Deity, who would at length extinguish or annihilate all evil: whereas the very essence of the doctrine we have been examining, is the frightful fact that, under the immediate administration of the Most Holy and Most High, neither moral nor penal evil shall be caused or permitted ever to cease.

It has been well said, by a late writer, "Admit but the possibility of the ultimate disappearance of evil, and the burden of the mystery of its present existence becomes from that moment not intolerable. The crushing weight of an infinite pressure is lightened. That anything, or many things, can be working together now for final evil, and that nothing ever can or will cause the universe to become again like its Author, all-good; this is the disturbing, distressing thought or theory, which, in proportion as it is received, outweighs all accumulation of evidences from all the regions of physical or metaphysical theology. Any mystery, or even any evil, may be borne, if we may be permitted to believe that it will cease at some point of the future; but the moment we assume that the least evil is eternal, we darken our whole view of God's character and government indefinitely."

In that admirable treatise, "The Eclipse of Faith," the atheist and sceptic are introduced as saying, "We agree with you Christians, that the Bible contains no greater difficulties than those involved in the inscrutable constitution and course of nature." \* To that position we can fully accede, if it be admitted, as has been here argued, that the Bible does not reveal and affirm endless evil; but not otherwise. It is said, perhaps truly, the universe does not contradict that doctrine; on the contrary, terrible analogies point towards it. But were this granted, it is yet but negative, or at most very obscurely presumptive; it leaves large room for hope that evil may not be endless; whereas, if the Bible unquestionably affirmed that it shall be so, it must be owned that it would reveal, positively, a continuance of sinfulness and misery incalculably greater than nature and the universe anywhere foretell or demonstrate. Most true it is, that the Bible reveals (in God's perfection and the prospect of the redeemed) unspeakably higher good than nature could even imagine; but, not the less, it would contain greater difficulties concerning evil than nature presents, if it really taught what many find in it.

We are quite aware that the foregoing arguments can be very ingeniously disputed, with great plausibility and frequent success, by skillfully evading a fair view of what has been advanced, and by denouncing the reasonings employed as heretical and pernicious.

It would be easy for an adroit writer to minister to the zeal or prejudices of a party, and perhaps to reinforce his own convictions—whether firm or tottering—by skillfully constructing and disposing such strictures. It is sufficient reason for publishing this volume without a name, that we are the less called on to answer such aspersions, or partial, and incorrect representations as those criticisms might possibly contain. They would be best answered by silence, and by the indications -which these pages offer—if at all responding to our desire and consciousness—of an upright and devout aim, and a fair treatment of the question. We have no expectation that our arguments will convince persons who are firmly fixed, and as it were entrenched, in contrary opinions. On the other hand, we have no apprehension that they will promote unbelief or heresy; or will tend to weaken the faith and obedience, or abate the love and gratitude of those who shall accept them as conclusive, or admit that they possess some weight. Meanwhile we trust that they will cheer and disburden certain minds, now shaken and oppressed with grievous doubt; as showing that the doctrine of unending evil is no more necessary to the belief of Christ's deity or Christ's redemption, than is the doctrine of Christ's real bodily presence in the Eucharist, or that of infant perdition; that, on the contrary, the renunciation of the belief that evil will never terminate or be destroyed, renders the "great mystery of godliness" incomparably more credible; the adoration of God our Savior unspeakably more cordial and confiding; and his gospel a more glorious and veritable gospel for the world.

We offer heartfelt prayer to the Author of all truth and virtue, for tenderness of conscience, and a right spirit, that this our happier doctrine may never, by us or by the readers of these pages, be wrested as, by some, all doctrines of grace have been; may never be so perverted, as to bear antinomian fruit; never to make sin appear less hateful and formidable; nor the punishment of unpardoned sin less certain and imminent, nor its anguish less intense; but, on the contrary, that, by the fuller credibility and conceivableness of this prospect, it may take deeper hold on many spirits.

We would desire and pray that these views of divine equity and mercy, which approve themselves gloriously and delightfully to our moral judgment, may prompt us at once to a more fervent thankfulness and devout self-scrutiny, proportioned to our stronger belief and apprehension of a Redeemer's love, and of the vast spheres and cycles of manifold efficacy in which that love will be evinced and triumph.

If there were to be any one of us, or of our readers, who should become less afraid of perdition, because perdition is here so represented as to be an object of rational belief; if there were any one who should learn to abhor iniquity less, because here taught that the God, who is all-good, will (as we trust), in some remote hereafter, blot out and expunge from his creation that which He far more abhors; if any one should aim at all less strenuously at being made altogether and quickly meet for his Redeemer's joy, because he has learned to hope that those who, through hardness of heart, shall never be made meet for it, will, after endurance incalculable by us, "utterly perish;" that unhappy person (continuing so to abuse the glad tidings) must be believed to provoke and draw down upon himself the most lengthened and severest sufferings of futurity. Wherefore? Because he "continues in sin that grace may abound;" or, at least, flatters himself, that it will superabound towards him, at the expense of divine truth and justice. Such a case (may God forbid its occurrence) would appear even more criminal and wretched, than that of those who can pervert God's grace, while holding the darkest and harshest tenets that man's theology has supposed or constructed from the Christian Scriptures; because such a reader would be perverting that view of the gospel which is justly felt to be more attractive and glorious; consciously making an evil use of what he professes to accept as the true and blessed interpretation of God's gracious purposes.



In the meantime we conclude our inquiry with this heartfelt prayer to the sole Author of good. Thou, in whom all moral glory and excellence combine and reign, who art all-holy, all-just, all-merciful, unerring in the purposes and acts which those attributes involve and regulate—Thou, to the transcendent beauty, unity, and harmony of whose spiritual perfections, our weak conceptions of goodness are but faint analogies—Thou knows the feeble thoughts which it has been here attempted to arrange and to express.

So far as they are founded in thy holy truth, and devoutly intended to subserve thy glory, and to aid our fellow-men in faith and hope and adoring thoughts of Thee, prosper them, we pray Thee, toward those most important ends. If, more or less, " we have erred," if our narrow apprehension of the character and scope-of thy justice and thy mercy, and of the infinite range of thy divine acts and counsels, has misled us into some wrong interpretations of thy revealed truth, Thou sees that, so far as we can ascertain our ruling motive, it has been, in all humility and reverence, to vindicate the honor and rectitude of thy ways. Therefore, we pray Thee, O adorable Lord, to forgive those errors and that short-sightedness. Graciously avert all ill result from them, which we most earnestly deprecate. Make these investigations, whatever alloy of error be found in them, at least very useful to some kindred minds, who hitherto have not been able to bear a more overwhelming doctrine, neither yet now are able. And let not any, good Lord, pervert these words to their own harm and loss. We beg it in his name who came not to condemn, but to save. Amen.

THE END.

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