THE PROMISE OF LIFE,

AND The Doctrine of Everlasting Punishment.

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THE POPPY PLAGUE AND ENGLAND'S CRIME, HOLINESS UNDER THE GOSPEL, ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE following chapters contain the substance of a course of lectures delivered in Reading in response to a unanimous request of the church of which the author was then minister.

Although convinced of the truth of conditional immortality, after a protracted mental exercise, and without knowing any person who held the same, or any book in which the idea was advocated, he had naturally in the course of eight years become acquainted with many defenders and defences of what he now holds to be clear and important truth, and some of the facts and quotations relevant to this subject which he has gathered from time to time were introduced into the lectures, and are now repeated without special mention of the sources from which they have been borrowed, particular reference being impossible, because the books, some of which are American and out of print, are not now within reach of the author. This acknowledgment is chiefly true with reference to the works of the late Professor C. F. Hudson, which are the most comprehensive and learned which have been written upon this subject. In these, and in the deservedly well- known 'Life in Christ' of the Rev. Edward White, as well as in 'The Perishing Soul,' by Rev. J. M. Denniston, M.A., the teaching of the Christian Church during the first four centuries, and also the opinions of some of the most famous Rabbis respecting the eternal life and the second death have been made familiar to many English readers by a number of remarkable quotations. Some of these are here reproduced, and to a similar extent the author has been indebted for illustrations of the faiths of the heathen world to ' A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life,' by W. R. Alger, (New York,) and to E. F. Lytton, M.A., in 'Life or Death.' With respect to the interpretation of Scripture, especially of the few passages which are generally thought to justify a belief in the everlasting existence of all men, the conclusions reached by independent thought are happily not original, but in agreement with those of many devout and intelligent writers on the same theme. The fact that these conclusions have been often published, and that there is no occasion for adding to the simple and natural explanations which they have afforded of such texts as Matt. 25. 46, or Mark 9. 48, has led the author to deal much less fully with this part of the subject than he would otherwise have done.

What may be called the negative argument against the doctrine of a miserable immortality is contained in the exegesis of these few texts, according to the analogy of Scripture. With the popular, but fallacious, interpretation of these vanishes every shadow of evidence in favour of endless sin and suffering. But it will be seen that the chief feature of this little treatise is the exhibition of positive truth in the ' promise of life, ' which it is impossible to interpret consistently or reasonably without recognising the loss of all life and consequent extinction as the doom of the finally impenitent. The object of the author in publishing another testimony in support of what is still the least popular side of a vexed question, is not to question the authority of Holy Scripture, but to enforce this by protesting against unnatural interpretations, and by pointing out and applying the simple rule by which alone the consistency of the Bible can be maintained.

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THE PROMISE OF LIFE.

CHAPTER 1.

THE MODERN REVOLT FROM AN ANCIENT CREED.

IN approaching the great subject of ' the Promise of Life, ' which involves the unspeakably solemn one of the doom of the wicked, we shall first consider the need for the inquiry in which we are about to take part as it arises out of the nature and importance of the subject itself, and as it is specially occasioned by the present thought and feeling of Christendom respecting it.

The subject before us is not one of barren speculation.

Next to our duty to God, and inseparably connected with it, is the duty of caring for our fellow-men. What sort of patriot should we think him to be who would care nothing for the liberties and prosperity of his countrymen of the next generation? But what is our country to the world, with its countless millions of all the ages, and what are the possibilities of time to those of eternity? And let it be remembered that it is the fate of the majority about which we are inquiring. No one who is not prepared to contradict alike the plain statement of Jesus Christ about the broad and narrow ways, and the evidences of all but universal iniquity, can escape from the conclusion that the majority of intelligent and responsible mankind have an awfully personal interest in the reality covered by the words 'everlasting punishment.' But while with keen interest and practical sympathy we inquire about man's destiny, we are in the same study examining the character of God. He, as truly as his creature man, is known by his deeds, and, however we may struggle to reconcile with the theory of divine goodness what the truest voice of our nature, and of all good men's nature, condemns as evil, the result must be a hidden canker of unbelief, or a degradation of the divinely implanted sense of right, through a forced acceptance of what our silenced hearts do not cease to abhor.

We have, therefore, before us a practical subject of supreme importance, involving at once the destiny of man and the character of God.

No one will question that the doctrine of ' everlasting punishment, ' as generally stated or understood, is now the greatest stumbling-block of the world, and the greatest difficulty of the Church. We say now, because there have been ages of ignorance and superstition, in which whatever has been offered as truth by an arrogant and interested priesthood, has been unquestioningly received even by the noblest intelligences. Those ages have passed away, and multitudes whom God has endowed with powers of thought now demand proof, as well as assertion, of all that is brought to them in the name of religion. They would obey the command to be always ready to give a reason for their hopes, and, therefore, they look for a conclusive reason with every article of the creed which they are expected to subscribe.

Coming in this mind to the question now before us, earnest inquirers are likely to be surprised at the change which modern advocates of endless suffering have effected in the representation of it. They must see that, whereas in the past preachers called evangelical were wont to extract from it the utmost horrors which the imagination of their hearers could compass, the labours of the same class, and even of the same individuals, have of late been directed chiefly to the opposite end of modifying the severity of the doctrine, wherever that appeared to be compatible with the essentials of their theory. Thus it is now held to be reasonable, or at any rate harmless, to believe in the safety of all who die in infancy, and even in the salvation of the heathen who have never heard the Gospel, and there are very few who would say with Mr. George Müller, of Bristol, that heathen in the heart of Africa, who have never come in contact with Christianity, will be tormented in fire for ever and ever. Similar modifications are offered in representing the character of everlasting punishment. The comparatively little suffering of some is inferred from the principle of degrees of guilt, and made as much of as possible, while the idea of physical pain is discredited as uncertain and unnecessary.

But the silence of the pulpit with reference to this momentous theme is the most remarkable evidence of a general change of mind. By many-perhaps by the majority of Protestant preachers-the subject is very rarely alluded to, while amongst these

occasional utterances we may listen for years without hearing a positive declaration that eternal torment will be the penalty of earthly sin.

We can find no satisfaction in this change. It is far too little or far too much, and it conveys to those who look on the Church from without, the impression that our differences are but battles of words, which have no very great realities behind them. If everlasting punishment, in the sense of endless suffering, is true, to talk about alleviations is to insult our intelligence, and to trifle with the wrath of God.

The world has been told by ministers of Jesus Christ, and that during many centuries, that the unforgiven sins of a lifetime, short or long, moral or the reverse, will be punished with eternal torments, and the world wants to know if, in this nineteenth century of her era, the Church will stand by that belief. We owe no thanks to those who would throw the drapery of their ' alleviations ' around this awful figure of divine vengeance, or who would spare our feelings and their own by preaching as if they had forgotten its existence. We have no wish to live in a fool's paradise, or to help to keep the world asleep. Let us have the truth without apologies, for the truth will be able to maintain itself, even under the criticism of this most sceptical age. Are we to believe that any of our fellow-creatures, if only those who have heard but have not obeyed the Gospel, will be kept by their Creator in penal sufferings, which can be compared to the torment of fire, throughout the endless ages of his own eternity? Self- styled orthodoxy answers ' Yes; let that be distinctly understood, whatever may be said about 'alleviations.' It is this affirmation of ecclesiastical authority with which we have now to do. To exaggerate it is impossible, because, in its mildest form, it is an infinite horror which the finite mind of the most imaginative must utterly fail to comprehend.

* Theodore Parker has vividly painted two death scenes, in one of which an atheist mourns over the remains of his 'rose-bud daughter, ' while in the other a theological Christian watches the last agonies of a profligate son, and pictures these fathers looking one another in the face over the open grave, in which one has laid away his daughter for annihilation- he is the father of nothing; the other has buried his son in eternal torment, the father of a devil's victim. ' This may be contradicted by the sentiment of every bereaved parent, for there is much truth pointed at by the saying, ' We are all universalists when we lose our friends;' but it is a logically correct illustration of what most Christians profess to believe, and he would be a bold controversialist who would venture to meet the infidel on the ground which the latter has chosen.

Quoted at length by J. W. Barlow, M.A., in Eternal Punishment and Eternal Death. Longmans, 1865.

Against this doctrine of eternal torment, a great part, and not the least thoughtful part, of Christendom is in revolt.

The facts and reasons of that revolt are now to engage our attention.

We speak of the modern revolt against the doctrine of everlasting punishment, and in doing so, we are well aware that some will read this as an admission that the Church has, until our own restless age, acquiesced in this awful belief. The truth is far otherwise. Protests against it by the most distinguished Christian teachers reach back to the earliest age in which it was asserted, and that (to leave aside for the present the words of Scripture) was not the age of the Apostles.

And yet there is a sense in which the revolt is distinctively modern. The past ages of Christian history-marked in their first epoch by persecutions and deadly heresies, in the second by universal apathy and priestly tyranny, and in the third by the revival of saving truth and the subsequent struggle for full religious liberty-have afforded no such opportunity of freedom, leisure, and competence for the discussion of this question as that which we now enjoy.

This opportunity has been largely used, and the result is seen in an abundant and increasing literature of dissent and protest, and in the rising up on all hands of such a body of earnest, learned, and devout opponents as must force upon every 'orthodox' person, not strangely wanting in modesty or common sense, the conviction that there is at least something reasonable to be said on the other side, and must demonstrate the obligation lying upon all who would not be content with the traditions of men to examine thoroughly the foundations of their creed respecting life and immortality on the one hand, and death and destruction on the other.

When such evangelical commentators as Professor Dörner in Germany, and Dean Stewart Perowne in England; such devout thinkers and Christian moralists as Dr. Horace Bushnell and Thomas Binney; such authorities in reason as John Locke of old; such Greek scholars as Drs. Mortimer and Weymouth, principals respectively of the City of London and Millhill Schools; such practical preachers as Dr. Joseph Parker and Mr. R. W. Dale, with many others of equal name and character in France, Switzerland, Germany, America, and England, unite in accepting as the teaching of Scripture the doctrines of conditional immortality and the extinction of the wicked, only ignorance of facts, or a resolution to attach no importance to any opinions or convictions but their own, can account for the refusal in which many persist to reconsider their belief in universal immortality and eternal torment. In illustration of this decided change in those who are worthily reckoned leaders of religious thought we shall recall the words of Mr. R. W. Dale, in which he confessed his belief in conditional immortality before the Congregational Union in 1874:

' There are some of us, and to this class I myself belong, who have taken a definite position. We have reached the conclusion that eternal life is the gift of our Lord Jesus Christ; that this life is not given to those who reject the Gospel, but given in the new birth to those who believe, and who are thereby made partakers of the divine nature. We warn men that while they continue in

impenitence, they fail to secure it; and if they continue impenitent to the end, they are destined to indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish; that their punishment will not regenerate, but destroy them; that in the fires to which they are destined, they will not be purified, but consumed, and that from the second death there is no resurrection. I cannot tell what extent these modifications of the earlier doctrine have affected the convictions of Congregational ministers and churches. The change, if there has been change, has been almost a silent one. I believe that very few ministers have declared that they have abandoned the older doctrine. I believe in those cases in which it has been explicitly and emphatically abandoned, and the theory of life in Christ earnestly and emphatically maintained, churches and congregations have accepted the transition without much surprise and without any protest. This, at least, has been true in my own case; and I wish, with the greatest possible emphasis, to state that, in my own experience, the reception of this doctrine has not only not enfeebled my belief in the great doctrines of the evangelical faith, and especially in the doctrines of the incarnation, the atonement, and regeneration, but has given all those doctrines a firmer hold on my intellect, my conscience, and my heart. '

But in estimating the modern revolt against the idea of endless suffering we must remember the very large number of those who have not accepted the doctrine of conditional immortality, but who have, in common with the adherents of that view, abandoned as unscriptural, the dogma of eternal pain. The evangelical and learned Tholuck was for many years the most esteemed representative of this school in Germany, to which Neander was also understood to belong, and in England Mr. Samuel Cox, the editor of the Expositor and author of 'Salvator Mundi,' is well known as one of the foremost advocates of the hope of a final and universal restoration.

Mr. Cox, who has unusual opportunities of knowing the theological opinions of his ministerial brethren, said some time ago that he hardly knew one minister who retained the old-fashioned belief in everlasting punishment.

Now my sympathies are not with universalism. I do not think it can be fairly reconciled with the general teaching of Scripture, or its express statements respecting the doom of the ungodly; but we must take it into account in estimating the present opposition to the old dogma, and we must also take into account the opinion of those who occupy a position somewhere between that of conditional immortality and that of universalism, believing with the late Mr. Henry Dunn, or with Canon Farrar, or Mr. Baldwin Brown (unless these latter prefer to be ranked as universalists), that although there may be exceptional cases of final obstinacy and ruin, yet the great majority of mankind must somehow ultimately be saved, because, as Dr. Guthrie said, in spite of Confession of Faith and Catechism, ' If at the close of the war Satan retains half his kingdom his head is not crushed.' It is the feeble, if not dishonest retort of some advocates of eternal evil, that these theories contradict and destroy one another; but, however they may differ, they have one common feature which constitutes the germ-truth of each and all, however well or ill that truth may be developed; and that germ-truth is, that the revealed character of God and the general teaching of Scripture prohibit the thought that sin and suffering will be prolonged eternally, and that, in one way or another, God will at last have all things reconciled to Himself. Thus a large proportion of the most learned and practical leaders of the Church have abandoned the belief in eternal misery, and when we consider the creeds and trust-deeds by which our ancestors, who professed almost universally to hold this dogma, stereotyped belief for the endorsement of all who should come after them, and especially of those who should be entrusted with the ministry, we may well be surprised, not that the number of dissentients is no greater, but that it is so considerable. There must necessarily be some bias in favour of beliefs which are bound up with peace and honour, and, while hardly any will change their theological position until they are quite convinced of its inconsistency with truth, this entire conviction borders on the verge of impossibility, where the voice of the Church and old habits of thought unite with personal interests and necessities to resist it.

The State Church of England is a notable example of freedom from this particular bondage. Besides the Thirty nine Articles which now contain her creed, there were three others in the reign of Edward 6., of which two referred to the condition of the lost, one condemning the belief in the unconscious state of the soul, and the other that of a final and universal restoration; and the two together at least seeming to imply the doctrine of endless suffering. These articles were removed in the fourth year of Elizabeth, and so lately as 1864, the Lord Chancellor, on the ground of this fact, gave judgment, with the approval of the two Archbishops, that everlasting torment was not a doctrine of the Church of England.

Many intelligent persons, occupying important positions in the Church, have not yet thought seriously on this question. I have been surprised, in several instances, to find such persons quite unable to give a reason for their adherence to the old belief. On more than one occasion, men of great popularity as preachers and organisers of Christian work, have frankly told me that they held that view as a matter of course, and without study, for which they had no time; while one added, ' I hold it superficially, as I must do a great many things.' These persons were, of course, reckoned satisfactorily ' orthodox.' There are some others again who think, but who do not feel, and to whom the desperate difficulty of such a subject presents a pleasing fascination, and an opportunity for their powers; while others, who are not without natural feeling, glory in ignoring it, because believing they are required by God to do so, and profess, as a popular Scotch authoress did in my hearing, to wish God to damn even their little children in eternal torments if they should die without faith in Christ.

But thinking and feeling men and women, however they may be bound by the creed of antiquity, regard it as an awful burden; and some of them, like the great French preacher Saurin, who laboured to tone down the doctrine with ' alleviations ' and then acknowledged that his life was blighted by what was left, or like Albert Barnes or Archer Butler, who both confessed it to be a maddening mystery, are spending their lives in the deep shadows of doubt about God and sorrow for man. And may we not reasonably deny the right to criticise us of any who have no knowledge of such experience. May we not ask those who would decide offhand that we are in error, whether they have ever wept over the prospect of a lost world; whether they have ever

agonised in prayer that God would give them some ray of light upon the awful doctrine of an eternal hell; whether they have fled for a single hour from the presence of their fellow-men and the enjoyments of society, under the pressure of the intolerable sorrow? Some of us have done these things, and our readers will hardly think it strange that we cannot recognise as competent to judge us, or to estimate the doctrine which we now solemnly repudiate, those whose eyes have never been wet with sympathy for a world they believe destined to eternal woe.

For myself I may say that while I thought this doctrine was in the Word of God, I preached it, even when it had almost broken my heart: nay more, when no answer seemed to come to my prayer for light, and I was still bound in the fetters of traditional theology, I cried the awful words of divine warning through the streets, more after the fashion of Jonah in Nineveh than after that of New Testament preachers. Who then are these that would teach us regard for the Scriptures, or earnestness in proclaiming what we believe to be true?

Now, before examining the teaching of the Bible, it may be well to meet some preliminary objections. In the first place, our inquiry is deprecated as sentimental, and this word, as commonly used, conveys no doubt a suggestion of weakness. We acknowledge it to be sentimental, as far as that term is suitable to the moral sense when demanding unmistakable proof or removal of a doctrine which is inherently improbable. But when it is objected that we are, as creatures and especially as sinners, incompetent to say what must characterise divine judgment, we see an attempt to evade justice in the name of justice, as counsel will sometimes do for a bad and hopeless cause by raising technical objections to the competence of the court, and we emphatically deny the assertion as not less unscriptural than absurd. Did not Abraham claim to know what became ' the Judge of all the earth,' when the first announcement of His purpose seemed to imply an indiscriminate destruction of the righteous and the wicked? Was not the Prophet Ezekiel charged by God to appeal to the moral sense of the hardened exiles of Babylon in the words, ' Is not my way equal; are not your ways unequal?' and are not even the heathen, though sunk in that abyss of moral degradation described in the first chapter of Romans, yet represented as ' knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death? It would be strange, indeed, if that moral sense which remains the witness for God in every man, and which makes even the wicked recognise the due reward of their deeds, were in the best of men to be outraged or even silenced by the truth!

I am not now asserting that our moral sense can lead us to a definite and satisfactory conclusion respecting the full penalty to which sinners are liable, but I do say that it is outraged when it is required to call that good when attributed to God, which it condemns as evil in man, or to believe that divine love and justice are essentially different from the qualities which we call by these names among ourselves, and I say further, that it has with respect to this matter of final judgment, a divinely given perception which we are authorised and obliged to take into account by the teaching and by the example of God Himself, and that as the doctrine of endless torment in retribution for the sins of an earthly life is irreconcilable with the moral sense of many, and as we think, of all who consider what it means, there is at any rate good ground for inquiry, whether the teaching of Scripture on the subject has not been misunderstood.

Again we are told that the voice of nature is not with us in our protest against the idea of infinite severity. This must mean that God in nature is infinitely severe, which we utterly deny. Law is remorseless and its sanctions are often terrible, but the man must be blind who does not see that in nature mercy rejoices against judgment. True, death prevails, and death for the most part by violence, but the prevalence of death allows countless generations to enjoy the boon of life, and the violence which destroys on the one hand while it feeds on the other, is, even to its victims, more merciful than the alternatives of disease or starvation. And if the severity of nature is felt especially by man, that severity is strictly limited even in its operation on the worst of sinners, the end of whose ways is death; while, by those who are willing to learn, the difficulties and dangers which beset human life are full of instruction and stimulant, waking in them knowledge and strength which would never have been possible to dwellers in a paradise.

Yet again: the authority or the supposed common belief of the Church is invoked in bar of inquiry. But while I listen with respect to the voice of the Church when I can hear it and that is very seldom-I emphatically decline, with every true Protestant, authoritative interpretations of Scripture. And further, the Church has never agreed upon this question, and perhaps the nearest approach to agreement in the early ages is to be found in the universalism which prevailed throughout the East, and largely also in the West, during the third and fourth centuries.

And finally, those who would prevent inquiry assert that the declarations of Scripture are so plain, that there is no room or excuse for a doubt of their meaning. It ought to be a sufficient reply to such self-appointed judges to remind them of the men who are of different opinion, but if this consideration does not avail, we must urgently press the question-Who are you, whose mere voice is to convict of ignorance or dishonesty many of the most learned and devout and earnest ministers of Christendom? or, as St.

Paul put it to a similar critic of his day, after showing that it cost Christ death and resurrection to attain the right to judge the living and the dead:-' But thou, why dost thou judge thy brother? and thou, why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.' We shall have full opportunity before we leave this subject of examining the teaching of Scripture, and we shall do so with very little reference to the original languages, which most people do not understand, and which, although they sometimes make the truth clearer, are certainly not necessary to its discovery. I accept the English Bible as a final authority, not, indeed, in any isolated text with a stereotyped theological meaning, but in what may be proved to be its general teaching, or the teaching of any text fairly interpreted by others, in which the same or similar expressions occur.

Thus far my object has been only to show that there is reason for a decisive inquiry, and to whatever conclusion this inquiry may lead any of us, we shall still have to do with a great fact in this revolt of modern thought. It is widespread and earnest, and unless we can find other means to control it than reiterating our creeds and carrying on our evangelical activities, it will go far to eat out the heart of the Church.

Ministers owe very plain speaking to their congregations on this awful subject. Their expositions and exhortations will not take the place of a straightforward answer to the question which is uppermost in earnest hearts respecting the 12 The Modern Revolt from an Ancient Creed.

character of God and the destiny of man. Let us deal in plain words with this dogma of the Church, which, whether it be true or false, is more than any other religious opinion straining the faith of some and confirming the opposition of others. If it be of God, let it be preached fearlessly and with the prominence (now rarely given to it) which its unspeakable importance demands; but if it be an invention or a gloss of men, let every honest preacher free himself and his people from its thraldom. In the affairs of nations great evils may be long endured, but at length, if not constitutionally remedied, they provoke revolution, which, in removing the grievance, destroys also the fabric of the State. The Church, with its theology of eternal sin and misery, is in more danger of such a calamity than some who are at ease imagine. Truth by itself will outride all storms, but truth bound up obstinately with error, may at last furnish those who trust in the fatal combination with no more complete or satisfactory escape than that of St. Paul's shipwrecked company at Melita ' on boards and broken pieces of the ship. '

CHAPTER 2.

THE WORLD'S BELIEFS RESPECTING IMMORTALITY.

THE existence of God and the immortality of the soul are generally thought of by Christians as twin axioms of religion, and therefore to call the latter in question must necessarily appear to many to be hardly separable from atheism.

It is difficult and far from pleasant to dispute what has so long been taken for granted that it has grown into the semblance of a self-evident truth; and yet many such time honoured beliefs, resting only on the assertions of the learned or the arrogant in times of ignorance, have been exposed as fallacies and driven from the minds of free and thinking men, and doubtless some more will have to follow them before the Church contents itself again with the teaching of Christ and his Apostles. Our present question is whether the doctrine of the natural or universal immortality of human souls may not be one of these.

But let us mark distinctly the limit of inquiry, since misunderstanding on this subject is prevalent. We hardly need to say we entertain no doubt that immortality is possible to man, and that it will certainly be enjoyed by some; but we do need to say plainly, in order to the nature of our inquiry being understood, that we also believe in the resurrection and after- state of all men, while we distinguish between such after- state or survival and immortality. Persons who represent the denial of natural immortality as involving a disbelief of judgment and punishment (and even of protracted punishment) for the wicked, expose their own thoughtlessness and ignorance of the point at issue. The question is not whether men will live after death or not, but whether there is in human nature, apart from the operations of redeeming grace, a soul or spirit that must live for ever.

We shall, therefore, proceed to examine the ground upon which this prevalent opinion rests. First of all we come upon the argument of consciousness. Men feel, we are told, that they are immortal, and this universal sentiment is a simple and resistless proof that they are so. It is not strange if this reply intimidates some inquirers, for it proposes to set the whole human race against them as witnesses; and yet, like many armies that are irresistible on paper, this array of witnesses dwindles into something very manageable, if not contemptible, when figures are made to correspond with effective force. Before thus reducing the estimate of this force and then trying conclusions with it, it may be well to observe that even less argument than we have here has seemed to some sufficient to defend the doctrine of natural immortality. One of the foremost of modern theological reasoners, Dr. R. Winter Hamilton, wrote these words:

' We argue with confidence that, as man can meditate his immortality, he cannot be less than immortal. '* Here, be it observed, nothing is said about the universality of the sentiment, nothing even about a supposed consciousness or confident expectation. It was enough for this thinker that human nature should anywhere present the phenomenon of a meditation upon its own immortality: that meditation would prove the imperishableness of the nature and of the race. Following this professor in legitimate analogy, we may argue that whatever a man can imagine himself to be, that he is. How well the world would be supplied with distinguished personages if men only had to imagine in order to have or to be! This is arguing with confidence indeed.

The same writer, having established man's immortality by reference to his imagination, makes the most of the imagined proof by saying: ' Immortality is as much a property and determination of his nature as reason or any quality besides;' and he fortifies himself against the contradiction of revelation by adding: ' No revelation could overthrow the fact, for to dispute the fact would be to overthrow its own pretension.' If such an author as Dr. R. W. Hamilton, a doctor of laws and a doctor of divinity, could lay down such shallow sophisms as incontrovertible truths, what may we not expect from popular and unlearned prejudice!

Quoted in a pamphlet on this subject, by Mr. J. Sheppard.

But to return to the supposed general expectation of immortality, which furnishes a rather more respectable argument than Dr. Hamilton's ' meditation.' The most that is said or that can be said in the statement of this argument is that all men fear or hope for a life after the death of the body, and that this proves the immortality of the soul, unless the universal belief in a future existence is a sublime and ineradicable delusion-a warning and a moral influence based upon an incomprehensible lie. The fallacy of this popular argument lies partly in the statement of fact, and partly in the inference deduced from it. First, as to the fact readily grant that there is nothing upon which men have more speculated than the possibility of a life after death nothing about the fundamental or elementary thought of which there has been so general an agreement in all times and circumstances. But this admission is very different from the assertion referred to. That beings endowed with intellect, thwarted and interrupted by death, and yet surrounded by natural phenomena suggestive of a life out of death, should speculate upon the possibility of a future state would be inevitable, even if no future state were intended for them. To wish to live is natural, and the wish is father to the thought. But we also recognise the influence of traditional truth in these speculations. The defaced remnants of a primitive religion have doubtless done as much as the hopes and fears of man to shape his expectations of a future.

Yet all these influences together have never produced that common belief in the immortality of the soul which is so confidently asserted. In the days of Socrates-in the home and spring-time of philosophy-most men, according to the great moralist's testimony, believed that at death the soul would utterly perish with the body; and his statement was confirmed by the fact that in the great plague of Athens the multitude, instead of being moved by religious faith to prepare for a future state, plunged into excesses of sensuality as having no expectation of anything that could be spared to them by death. If this was the case with Greece in the height of her glory, it would be strange indeed if the rest of the world, for the most part comparatively thoughtless and barbarous, were found to have generally possessed a consciousness of immortality.

In order to estimate rightly the prevailing thought of mankind upon this subject before the introduction, or apart from the influence, of Christianity, we must consider the religions of the world in three great and natural divisions.

The first of these consists in the faiths which have been moulded by primitive tradition; the second, in the offspring of speculation; and the third, in the effect of revelation.

It is impossible to keep these divisions quite separate-they overlap and modify one another; but this fact need not prevent us appreciating their distinctive characteristics, or observing what tradition, philosophy, and Judaism had to say respectively to the doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

Turning our attention first to the great examples of tradition- to Chaldea, Egypt and India-we are struck with a common feature which is often hastily identified with a belief in immortality. This is metempsychosis, or the transmigration of souls, which Herodotus describes particularly as held by the ancient Egyptians, and which is a common tenet of Brahminism and Buddhism, and, therefore, of one-half of the modern population of the globe. Professor Röth, of Tubingen, even understands the Rig Veda, the most sacred of the Shastras of India, to teach the annihilation of the wicked. At any rate, there is nothing in this Eastern doctrine implying the individual immortality of the soul. The mental or spiritual part of man was held to be an emanation from the Deity, which, during a long course of years-in the Egyptian mythology 3000-will animate many or even all kinds of living creatures, and will at last return to, and lose its individuality in, God, like a drop of water returning to the ocean. It has been truly said, ' The Orientals are pervaded with a profound horror of individual existence, and with a profound desire for absorption into the infinite Being. ' Here is certainly no belief in immortality in the sense in which Christians understand the word. In the systems of India all hope or thought respecting individual existence is bounded by the expectation of universal convulsions of nature, which take place at immense intervals, and in which every created being is doomed to perish.

Nor, if we examine the mythologies of rude and childlike tribes, shall we find many traces of a belief in the immortality of the soul, while evidence of a contrary belief is by no means uncommon. That strange confusion of the ideas of survival and immortality which we have noticed as underlying the arguments of Christian philosophers, and which shuts up many minds to the alternative of no existence or endless existence after death, appears but little in the conceptions of uncivilised people. Along the coast of Guinea the negroes throw their dead into the sea, in order that the soul may be extinguished soon after the death of the body. The inhabitants of the Sandwich and Fiji islands believed firmly in survival, but expected wicked spirits to be devoured by devils or by human spirits stronger than themselves. Druidism in Europe presents an exceptional belief in unconditional immortality, but here it is mixed up with the transmigration of souls, and with the doctrine of a final universal salvation. Zoroastrianism contrasted similarly in Asia with surrounding systems. It included the idea of resurrection as well as that of immortality.

Its declaration respecting the punishment of the wicked is as follows: ' The author of evil shall not exult over them for ever; their prison-house will soon be thrown open; the pangs of three terrible days and nights, equal to the agonies of 9000 years, will purify all, even the worst of demons. The anguished cry of the damned, as they writhe in the lurid cauldron of torture, will find pity in the soul of Ormuzd.' Thus here also immortality is associated with, and seems to have demanded a belief in, universal salvation. Indeed, it is doubtful whether any false religion, except savage Mahomedan, which is neither traditional nor speculative, but an eclectic imposture, framed under the influences of corrupted Judaism and Christianity, exhibits the idea of the individual immortality of wicked men.

Let us now glance at the conclusions of speculative philosophy. The great thinkers of Greece-from Pythagoras to Zeno-and their illustrious Roman disciples were less original in their speculations on the nature and destiny of man than they were in the ethical or moral laws which they laid down, and the considerations by which they endeavoured to commend them.

They were men of vast intellect, culture, and courage, and most of them confirmed themselves in their superiority by extensive travel and observation of the superstitions or philosophies of other lands, especially those of Chaldea and Egypt. They had the sense, too, to adopt what they could not improve, and thus Pythagoras received from Egypt or India, or both, the Oriental theory of the divine origin, transmigration, and final absorption of souls. But neither he nor any who followed him, and most of these were content to endorse his conclusions on the subject, seem to have conceived the idea of an individual immortality. How little like Christian belief were these theories of the greatest minds of antiquity will appear from a glance at the teaching of Plato, the disciple and equal of Socrates. To him the world was an animal with a rational soul. ' The souls of men were formed from the remainder of the rational soul of the world, which had previously given existence to the invisible gods and demons. ' We quote these words from the classical dictionary of Dr. Lemprière, who, being a doctor of divinity, could hardly have been expected to add, ' Plato was the first who maintained the immortality of the soul upon arguments solid and permanent, deduced from truth and experience.' Even these fancies, distantly related as they were to a definite and reasonable hope of immortality, seem rarely, if ever, to have amounted to conviction in those that held them. Cicero said that while he was reading Plato he was convinced of immortality, but that as soon as he laid down the book his doubts returned; and Archbishop Whately no mean judge of the reasoning powers and conclusions of others-has left his judgment of these speculations of philosophy in the following words:

'As to what Plato, and afterwards Cicero and others, said in behalf of [immortality], no reader of their own class seems to have had even any suspicion of their being in earnest.' Thus we may safely conclude that the supposed universal consciousness of individual immortality finds neither proof nor illustration among the master-thinkers of the past.

Our inquiry now turns to the possessors of divine revelation- the revelation of the Old Testament. What did the Jews believe respecting the immortality of the soul? On this point we have from the New Testament the very important information that ' the Sadducees said there was no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit.' Thus human consciousness failed, even in connection with Moses and the prophets, to demonstrate natural immortality to the intellectual, aristocratic, and priestly class which divided with the Pharisees the religious authority of the Jews. But the Pharisees themselves were far from being a compact body of believers in individual immortality. It is true Josephus describes them as such, but his authority has long been more than doubtful. We may be content to set against it a few decisive quotations. The Rev. S. Cox, a competent authority, says: ' The Jewish fathers of our Lord's time differed on the ultimate issue of the state and punishment in Gehenna.

Some held that it would issue in the ultimate salvation of all who were exposed to it, while others held that it would issue in their destruction, the very souls of sinners being burned up and scattered by the wind.' Nemesius, a writer of the fifth century, implies that the preponderating belief of the Jews was the destructibility of the soul. The great Rabbi Maimonides clearly taught this doctrine in the twelfth century, saying: ' The punishment that awaits the wicked man is that he will have no part in eternal life, but will die and be utterly destroyed. He will not live for ever, but for his sins will be cut off and perish like a brute;' and Dr.

Bentley, the great scholar and critic, refers to the same belief of annihilation as ' what some of the learned doctors of the Jews have esteemed the most dreadful of all punishments, and have assigned for the portion of the blackest criminals of the damned, so interpreting Tophet, Abaddon, the valley of slaughter and the like for final extinction and deprivation of being. ' We are forced by these testimonies to the conclusion that among the Jews, as among the idolatrous nations and the philosophers of the world, we must seek in vain for either an intuitive or a prevalent belief in individual immortality.

There is yet one more inquiry to be made before we commence our study of the Scriptures, and it regards the opinion or opinions respecting immortality which were held by the Christian Church in the earliest centuries. With some this consideration is of paramount importance, but it is difficult to understand how it can be so with any who are acquainted with the facts of early Christian history. The great apostasy had commenced under the eyes of the Apostles, and when the restraint of their authority was removed and the vast numbers of the Church had changed the world's persecution into patronage, the corruption of Christian doctrine and life went on together to a frightful climax of falsehood and wickedness.

Of course the times which were nearest to the Apostles were better than those more remote, and the belief of the second century is more likely to be true than the belief of the fourth; but even the second century can furnish us with no authoritative exposition of Apostolic teaching. A writer upon the errors of these times * remarks: ' The most striking feature of the literature of Christianity in the first century and the early part of the second was falsehood, and falsehood in the gross and intolerable forms of forgery and interpolation.

The number of spurious gospels relating false facts, and spurious epistles propounding false doctrines, and of spurious revelations describing invented or imaginary visions which appeared within that period, is really appalling. Not fewer than eighty of such are referred to by name in the writings of the fathers of the first four centuries, and these all forgeries relative to Christ and his Apostles, besides which, we have a mob of apocryphal fabrications in the names of the ancient prophets, patriarchs, sibyls, etc., which were either produced at that time, or were probably then largely interpolated.

Yet nearly all the fathers quote largely from these books in confirmation of their own opinions.' Even good men were driven from their moorings by the tremendous tide of wickedness and worldly philosophy. The great Augustine himself, whose influence on the belief of Christendom-both Papal and Protestant-has been hardly inferior to that of Peter and Paul, was not unaffected by it. Incredible though it may appear to some, Augustine believed in purgatory and prayers for the dead; in the possibility of burial, or the neglect of it, affecting the wellbeing of the departed soul; in the atoning efficacy of alms, and in baptismal regeneration. [The Errors of the Apostolic Fathers, ' by R. Osburn.] Thus the earliest and the greatest names of Christian antiquity might be almost as easily secured for the support of error as for the support of truth. Yet while we rely upon far higher authority than that of the Early Fathers ' for the establishment of what we hold to be true, it is well worthy of notice that the further back we go the less we meet with the tremendous doctrine of eternal torment which blazes so fiercely along the line of medieval theology, and that it had the support of no recognised Christian teacher till the end of the second century. Very different is the language of the earliest writers upon this most solemn subject; as for instance of Clement, the first Bishop of Rome, who asked: ' What world shall receive any of those who run away from Him?' or of Justin Martyr (A.D. 150), who said, 'We have learned that they only are made immortal who live piously and virtuously before God,' and ' The soul partakes of life because God wills it to live, and just so also it will no longer partake of life whenever He does not desire it to live, for it cannot live of itself, as God does.' Thus, too, Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch (A.D. 168), said man was created ' neither mortal nor immortal, for if the Creator had made him from the first immortal, He would have made him a god; if mortal, then God would appear as the author of death. He made him, then, capable of becoming either, so that by keeping the command of God he might attain immortality as his reward and become a god; but if he should turn to mortal things he would be himself the author of his own death. ' The language of Irenaeus (who died A.D. 202) is a most explicit repudiation of the idea of an everlasting existence for all men, while Arnobius, a century later, refers with strong condemnation to the same, as the opinion of those who with ' traditional arrogance. maintain that they are immortal just as God is.'

These citations make it evident that, to say the least (for we might say much more if it were necessary), there was no general belief in the immortality of the soul among the Christians of the first three centuries.

Notable examples have been gathered from later times equally contradictory of this supposed attribute of fallen humanity, from which we may content ourselves by taking the words of Luther: ' I permit the Pope to make articles of faith for himself and his faithful, such as that the soul of man is immortal, with all those monstrous opinions to be found in the Roman decretals.' We have thus seen that the beliefs of the past, whether civilised or rude, whether traditional, speculative, or consequent on revelation, furnish no support to the assertion that man is conscious of immortality, or that a belief in it has been a common article of his various creeds.

And even if the result of our examination of the past had been favourable to this theory, how could the scientific atheism of our own times be reconciled with it? The apostles of evolution are hardly inferior to the thinkers of ancient Greece, while they far surpass the average religionist of any age, yet they can find neither consciousness of immortality nor so much as the evidence of survival after death; and some of them, like Miss Martineau and Professor Clifford, have lately astonished and perplexed the Christian world by the cool and satisfied confidence with which they could talk on their death-beds of the prospect of utter extinction.

I would say to any who still insist on the natural immortality of man: Are you prepared to join issue with the masters of science, and upon their own ground expose the fallacy of their arguments, and prove to them that in man's nature, which they have so closely studied, there is evidence overlooked by them of a part and principle that can never die? Or are you prepared to argue that it must be thus because of the dignity and importance of him whose origin they are satisfied to find in the lowest forms of organised life?

Will you follow them in their examination of the Bushman or the Hottentot, and point out in their faces the indelible stamp of divinity? Or, if they prefer to test their theory by examples nearer home, will you go into the hovels of England and venture to assert that in every debased wretch whom you may see in these, whose wife is a broken-hearted slave and whose starved and beaten children are regarded only as they can minister to his appetites-a sink of pollution, a leprosy on the body of society-you find, in contrast with the brutes that toil and endure, patient and intelligent, affectionate and grateful, a thing so divine and precious that it is inconceivable that a holy and almighty God should ever deprive it of being?

If any will say this, I hope for the sake of common sense that they will also confess the Universalist's hope. There is grandeur in that hope, though it seems to us the grandeur of a dream and not of a revelation; but the thought that man is too great to perish, unsupported by any hope of his moral restoration--nay, bound up with a belief in his eternal deterioration and misery-appears to be the strangest, most contradictory, and most painful conception of which an ordinarily reasonable mind is capable. Let it be observed that we are not now dealing with the teaching of Scripture. We are preparing the way for that by disposing of prejudices which prevent many from asking what the Scriptures really teach.

We are not questioning the power of God, but we have seen no reason as yet to believe that He gives the glory of his immortality to sinful man. John the Baptist was as ready as Job to say, ' I know Thou canst do everything; yet he did not on that account expect the immortalisation of a generation of vipers, but, on the contrary, warned them that God was able of the stones to raise up children to Abraham, in the place of the ungodly, who would perish like chaff in the fire. What if we accept some of those conclusions of science which would modify the self-asserted orthodoxy of ages?

What if we believe in a survival of the fittest under the operation of moral law, and, by analogy, in an eternal survival of those, and those only, who are made perfect through partaking of the divine nature? Shall we necessarily be at variance with the Scriptures, or be putting upon them some unnatural interpretation? This is the great question for which we have been preparing the way, and which we shall fully consider in the following pages. We may now, however, assert so much as this, that no foregone conclusion, resting upon supposed consciousness or prevalent belief, car reasonably debar the inquiry. Nay, more: that if the Scriptures can with equal fairness be interpreted in favour of universal and of conditional immortality, we shall be bound by pure reason to prefer the latter as the more probable meaning. For in the absence of any authoritative statement, nothing can seem less reasonable, less worthy of God, or less agreeable to the interests of the universe, than the everlasting preservation of what is incurably and ever- increasingly evil. But we shall be able to carry our proof far beyond this point, and to show that throughout the whole course of revelation the only immortality directly or indirectly referred to in connection with man is represented as the purchase of the blood of Christ and the prize of faith.

CHAPTER 3.

THE TEACHING OF SCRIPTURE RESPECTING IMMORTALITY.

WE come now to the heart of the whole subject, for although it is interesting and important for the disposal of a groundless supposition to show how little tradition or consciousness has taught men to believe in a personal immortality, we can decide nothing except by a fair and full answer to the question, What saith the Scripture? Now it is a remarkable fact, that those who maintain the belief in eternal sin and suffering are generally, if not universally, unwilling to test the separate question of man's natural or acquirable immortality by a reference to the Scriptures. The importance of this question, both in itself and in its bearings upon the government of God and the interests of the Universe, is too obvious to allow a doubt in the mind of any sane person, and yet the advocates of what is called ' orthodoxy ' prefer to settle it by philosophical reasonings, as if the truth were too plain to need revelation, or as if, in fact, we were shut up to such reasonings because God had said nothing on the subject. Thus, in a volume lately published, under the title of ' The American Defence of Orthodoxy, ' composed of contributions on this subject by a number of the most acute and scholarly theologians of America, we have been surprised to find no reference whatever in by far the greater number of the essays to Bible statements respecting immortality. Tracts written in the same cause by comparatively feeble but pious men, are marked by the same peculiarity. Sometimes, however, this part of the subject, which we insist is the very heart of it, is glanced at and got rid of with a strange abruptness. Thus in a tract, published by Messrs. Yapp and Hawkins, we are told that ' the immortality or mortality of the soul is an unscriptural expression, and has nothing to do with the controversy. ' It is interesting to put beside this the statement from another tract published by the same house respecting what is generally regarded as another crucial term:

The word "everlasting" has been used injudiciously upon the one side, and unfairly upon the other. It is not always used in our commonly received sense; but constantly signifies something limited and terminable. I believe Gesenius's to be one of the best definitions of it, in his Hebrew Lexicon, namely, that the extent of duration signified is restricted or not according to the subject of which it is predicated.

Thus it can of itself prove nothing to demonstration on either side.' Putting together these two statements from the same source, we are informed that the meaning of everlasting with reference to man cannot be determined until we know whether man's nature is capable of an endless experience or not (in other words, whether man is or is not immortal); while, if we seek to settle this question by a reference to Scripture, we are met by the rebuff that the immortality or mortality of the soul has nothing to do with the question.

The inquirer may well ask, If this be so, what has anything to do with the question? but he will do still better to turn away from such guides who would lead him round in a vicious circle of sophistry, and seek directly from God himself an answer to one of the most reasonable and practical questions which the heart of man has ever asked, and which a revelation from God could not possibly have left unanswered.

This is the question concerning life and immortality. In common language this question is one, though new and various meanings may be attached to the words, either with or without authority. We shall presently examine these new meanings and the authority by which they are supported.

Meanwhile we observe that it was impossible for men to dissociate the ideas of endless life in any sense and immortality, since undying or indestructibility of nature is the primary, natural and constant meaning of the two words which are rendered immortality in the New Testament.

But here a general question respecting the interpretation of Scripture presents itself which we must answer once for all, and about which the difficulty consists less in answering it to the satisfaction of all parties than in recollecting and consistently adhering to the answer. By what rule are we to interpret Scripture when it is possible to do so literally or figuratively; in accordance with common language, or in a sense new and peculiar to itself?

We have no new canon of interpretation to recommend, but one which is incontrovertible, and yet practically ignored.

It is that the simple or conventional sense of words must be accepted as the sense intended, wherever this is possible. There is much figurative and hyperbolical language in the Bible, especially in its poetical parts. Thus ' the trees of the field ' are made to ' clap their hands, ' and the Psalmist's bones cry out in praise to God. Such language as this can mislead no one, because it is impossible to interpret it literally. But if we are told that when God speaks about life and death, immortality and destruction, alike in legal threat and Gospel promise, He does not mean what men have always understood by these words when used apart from revelation, but things entirely new, of which, too, the Bible itself contains no definition, we can only say that in that case what claims to be God's revelation is not made in man's language, and has no certain sound; and that if such words as these have lost their prima facie meaning, we have no security for the meaning of any others, and the Divine Book, instead of settling our difficulties, involves us in new ones from which we have no means of escape. Observe we are contending not for the literal, but for the simple or the conventional meaning of words. The literal sense, which we should get by a reference to the origin and derivation of a word, is often far from being either simple or conventional. Many words have come to mean something very different from what they meant when first used, and probably yet more different from the root from which they sprang, but to use a word simply is to use it according to its general and expected acceptation.

It is in this way that we believe God has spoken through the Bible to men. According to this rule, even the word everlasting will fail to support the doctrine of endless suffering; for though endless punishment does not as we may show hereafter-mean endless pain, the duration of the punishment itself is not, as competent authorities on all sides agree, determined by the simple or conventional use of this word as it was received by Jews or Greeks. We have quoted above the admission of this by an earnest advocate of what is still generally called ' orthodoxy.' A glance at a concordance will put this beyond doubt in any inquirer's mind. The accepted and familiar sense of the word which we render everlasting was not strictly endless, and yet it is the supposition that this is its meaning in reference to man which furnishes the apparent reason for putting an unnatural meaning upon life and death, immortality and destruction.

Even if it were impossible to render according to common use these latter words and the single word everlasting, we could not reasonably hesitate in determining which to treat as exceptional. If we fix the meaning of everlasting in the largest sense, we not only do so by an arbitrary preference, but we oblige ourselves to be inconsistent in treating this very word which cannot possibly be so rendered in all cases, and we destroy the only rule by which any certainty of interpretation is possible. The only conceivable reason for this preference is prejudice in favour of the theory of natural immortality. Those who can approach the Scriptures without prejudice, recognising the necessity of understanding their language wherever possible in the most natural sense, will certainly feel obliged to attach that sense to such words as life and death, considering at once their familiarity, their importance, their frequent recurrence, and their judicial character, unless the Scriptures themselves contain some statement about man's immortality or endless existence which cannot be made to agree with it. That it is unnatural and difficult to use these words in any other than the original or conventional sense, even in the language of theology, will appear from a consideration of the hymns and prayers of any Christian church. In these, if any other than the world-wide sense is used, it is with a direct reference to Scripture and its supposed peculiar meaning, or in a figure of speech which would be equally admissible in the treatment of any subject, because it would not disturb in the least the established use of the words employed.

Thus we can sing- ' Lord, it is not life to live, If Thy presence Thou deny; Lord, if Thou Thy presence give, 'Tis no longer death to die,' without any idea of offering or supporting a new definition of life and death, but intending what many would, without any reference to religion, as readily but less truly say about the objects of ambition or affection which seem necessary to their happiness. The impossibility of naturalising any other than the original as the chief meaning of these most familiar and important words, is manifested by the fact that the Bible has done nothing in this way during the 300 years that it has been exercising the most powerful influence over the English language, and although all that time it must have been supposed to support these new meanings by its authority. It is as necessary now as if the idea were an entirely new one to offer a definition or an explanation, and deliberately to substitute a theological for a conventional sense, if anyone would speak of life and death without reference to or agreement with the common uses of society.

Of course those who advocate the doctrine of eternal existence for all men, by declaring that the life promised to the righteous does not mean mere life, and that the death which is the penalty of sin is not mere death, have some apparent standing-ground in Scripture. We will not ignore this, but will carefully examine it. One passage alone, we are told, is sufficient to establish the peculiar theological meaning of life, viz., the words of our Lord himself in John 17. 3, ' This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent. ' The question is, whether we have here a definition of life or a statement of its conditions. The most satisfactory answer will be that plainly indicated by the analogy of Scripture. We have carefully examined with a concordance all the places in the Bible-nearly 400 in number in which the word life occurs, and the result, which may be tested by any inquirer, is as follows. In the Old Testament, 166 texts out of 213, or more than three-fourths of the whole number, refer to the present and physical life of man, though a few of these (as Prov. 4. 23 and Ezek. 13. 22) may also be claimed as referring to life in a higher sense. In the New Testament we reckon 49 texts (out of 158) to belong to this class. A second and very small but important class of texts, only occurring in the Old Testament, stands in close relation to this largest one. It numbers only six altogether, with but three illustrations, viz., the blood (which occurs three times), ' the tree of the field,' and the poor man's pledge; each of which is said to be the life, for the unmistakable reason that life depends upon each in one way or another. This disposes of more than half the passages in which life is spoken of, and in all of these the sense is that of present and

physical existence, between 2 and 3 per cent. only containing statements which are not literally correct; but the clearness and force of which, in reference to physical life, are only increased by a bold figure of speech. Of the remaining nearly equal number of texts, the vast majority refer to spiritual life, the distinctive characteristic of which is imperishableness or endless continuance; while the few passages not thus accounted for make up a class exactly corresponding in relation to spiritual life with the supplemental figurative class we have noticed above in its connection with physical existence, in which that on which spiritual life depends is boldly spoken of as the life itself. Thus among the seven examples of this last use which the Old Testament furnishes, we have in Deut. 30. 20, ' He is thy life and the length of thy days;' and in Prov. 4.13, of wisdom, ' keep her, for she is thy life. ' Of the nine similar passages in the New Testament the most important is that (John 17.3) the unnatural interpretation of which has occasioned our present inquiry. The correspondence of that passage with those last mentioned will be obvious to everyone, and as in only one sense can God be spoken of as ' the length of man's days,' we may hope that the same sense, which is abundantly supported by the analogy of Scripture, will be allowed by candid opponents to attach most naturally to these words of Christ.

There is, therefore, nothing in what the Scripture says about life to warrant an interpretation being put upon that word which would contradict or supersede its plain and universal sense. It is easy to show the same adherence of Divine revelation to the common language of men and its recognised uses with reference to death and destruction, or any other words which theologians have in the interests of particular doctrines connected with unprecedented meanings.

We are at too early a stage of our inquiry to pursue this subject further at present, but we shall return to it when we have occasion to consider the doom of the finally impenitent.

Enough has been said to rebut the assertion that the language of Scripture is not to be interpreted like the language of other books, and we therefore lay down again, upon a foundation which we have proved to be sound, the thesis that the doctrine of man's natural immortality cannot be sustained by references to a supposed peculiarity of Bible language, but must be established, if at all, by unequivocal statements directly or indirectly asserting the fact in the common language of men.

One more preliminary objection must be disposed of, viz., the difference which is supposed by some to exist between the character and purpose of Old Testament and New Testament phraseology. The writers who most strenuously insist upon this difference are chiefly the stricter sect of the Plymouth Brethren, and among them notably Mr.

Darby. He evidently regards this distinction as one of the chief means of defence of the doctrine of endless suffering, for he writes in his treatise on 'The Eternity of Punishment:' 'Death and destruction and the like in the Old Testament, though they may imply that displeasure which is the sign of what is connected with eternal misery, yet mean habitually in the Old Testament death and destruction by judgment in this world. The state of the soul afterwards may be learned from other truths, but what is expressed is present judgment without the smallest hint of what comes of the soul afterwards.

The New Testament recognises this even to death as judgment here too; but passes on to revelations of what follows, because life and incorruptibility are brought to light. Evangelicals hold the truth in effect, but they accept the application of terms and passages to what is eternal, which puts a weapon in the hands of those who teach error against which it is logically hard to defend themselves.' Similarly in the editor's preface stress is laid on ' the prevailing ignorance, even among those holding evangelical doctrine, as to the important difference between the government of God with reference to man in this world and His dealings in grace and judgment outside this present scene, which renders as a consequence the ordinary evangelical comparatively helpless ' in this controversy. The gist of this seems to be that the peculiar views respecting the difference between the Old and New Testament held by Mr. Darby, and a very small section of the Christian Church, are necessary for a strong position against those who believe in the final destruction of evil, or that the most exclusive brethren in its dispensational doctrines and the theory of eternal evil are likely to stand or fall together.

The fanciful character of this system of interpretation will appear to any simple and intelligent reader who will examine the Old Testament passages respecting judgment, which are quoted in the New Testament, as for example Acts 3. 23, or 13. 40, 41. The obvious but incredible implication of this theory is that, during four of the six thousand years of human history, Divine revelation, which at that time was chiefly conveyed in the form of law and its sanctions, did not inform the world of the final consequences and therefore of the real character of sin; that is, that God not only allowed men for forty centuries to remain helplessly ignorant of the terrific doom which hung over them as sinners, but that this discovery of eternal woe was concealed from the age of severity and reserved as a fit background of revelation for the glorious gospel of the love of God. Anything more dishonouring to God or revolting to a Christian conscience than such a representation of Divine government and grace it would be difficult to imagine.

* Compare also Matt. 3.12 with Isa. 5.24; Matt. 5.22 with Isa. 30.33; Matt. 7.13 with Prov. 7.27; Matt. 25.41 with Psalm 11.6; Mark 9. 48 with Isa. 66.24; 2 Thess. 1. 8, 9 with Levit. 22.3 and Isa. 24. 21-23; Heb. 12. 29 with Deut. 4.24 and 5.25; 2 Peter 2. 12 with Psalm 49. 20; Rev. 3. 5 with Exod. 32. 33 and Psalm 69. 28; Rev. 19.21 with Isa. 11.4.

We have therefore no reason or right to separate the threats and promises of the Old Testament from those of the New, except so far as to recognise the earthly and natural blessings, which by the former, especially though not exclusively, are promised to the seed of Abraham, and to appreciate the clearer light which the Lord himself and his Apostles caused to fall upon the everlasting truths of judgment and mercy which from the beginning had guided the feet of believers into the way of peace.

We have now settled two important preliminaries, and we shall therefore proceed to examine the teaching of the Bible respecting life and immortality, with the understanding that the common meaning of words is, in Scripture as elsewhere, the true meaning, except where another is necessary to the sense; and that the promises and threatening of both Testaments to the world at large are of one kind, though differing in clearness as the dawn differs from the noonday.

Everyone who has cared to inquire, however superficially, what the Bible teaches respecting immortality must know that it does not contain a single passage in which immortality is in any sense attributed to the human race. This must be allowed by all to be a very remarkable omission, considering the importance of the question which a single authoritative statement in favour of man's immortality would have settled for ever, and the vast amount of ancient speculation and of modern assertion which it has occasioned.

To say that it is taken for granted as a self- evident truth would be to ignore all the uncertainty, anxiety, and difference of opinion which we have shown to have existed in all times and countries, but which are among the most characteristic features of the thought of modern Christendom. It is impossible to point to any truth treated in this way by the Scriptures. It has been said the existence of God is not the subject of a formal statement, but it is unmistakably taken for granted and referred to in every page; while in no single text is it possible to find a thought clearly depending for sense or agreement with other Scriptures on the assumption of a universal immortality.

Probably few will venture to adopt this last argument, but many will say that the immortality of the soul is indirectly taught or implied in the Bible. Surely it would be strange if so stupendous a truth were only conveyed to us by implication in the Book of God! But we shall prove that such an implication is not necessary to nor even consistent with the conventional language of Scripture either as a whole or in those passages which are relied on as supporting the doctrine of eternal misery. As the whole case for that doctrine is represented by the idea of an implied immortality, it will be impossible for us entirely to dispose of this argument without an examination in detail of the Scriptures by the use of which it is defended. It is fair, however, before doing so, to call attention to the extreme improbability of a truth fundamental to the doctrines of man's nature and destiny, and of unsurpassed practical importance, being established by God upon the narrow and indefinite basis of a questionable inference.

If the Bible refers anywhere to man's natural immortality, it must surely do so in the account of his creation, both to display the peculiar glory of this greatest work of God, and to make man understand his relations and responsibilities by discovering to him the imperishableness and infinite value of his own nature. Accordingly, there is a general impression that the immortality of man is as good as asserted in the first chapters of Genesis. Let us see what reason for this impression is afforded by the inspired record. The statement that ' man became a living soul ' is regarded by some as an assertion of his immortality; but the groundlessness of this assumption will appear to anyone who looks at the marginal renderings of Gen. 1. 20 and 30, where every kind of animal is shown to possess ' a living soul, ' whatever those words may mean. A similar examination of the text will result in the abandonment of the words spirit, breath, and lives, as having any special meaning when applied to man; for all these words, and even all of them at once, as in Gen. 7. 22, are used of the brute creation as freely as of man. That the language of other parts of Scripture is equally indiscriminate will be readily seen by a comparison of Job 12. 10 with Dan. 5. 23. If it be said that because man was animated specially by the breath of God he cannot be altogether perishable, it is enough to reply that Scripture represents the breath of God elsewhere as destroying the wicked (Job 4. 9); and again, poetically, as producing frost (Job 37.10); while the Spirit of God, which surely is not less than his breath, is described as the cause of the creation of mere animal life (Psalm 104.30). Further, in Isa. 2. 22, the fact that man's ' breath is in his nostrils ' is referred to in proof, not of his divine dignity, but of his insignificance, which can hardly be reconciled with the supposition that he was made an immortal by God ' breathing into his nostrils ' the breath of life. And if the words mean more than the special interest of the Creator in the animation of his crowning work, what can they mean but that the Spirit of God was communicated to man and became a part of his original constitution? This is frankly but thoughtlessly accepted by many who do not see that thus man would actually be divine, and equally so in wickedness and sin as in his original perfection, and that thus God in government and judgment would be at variance with himself as indissolubly identified with the ruined work of his own hands. How different this conception is from the blessed truth that the Spirit of God visits man, strives with him for his good, and, if accepted, consents to dwell with him for ever and change him into a perfect conformity to his Maker, anyone may see.

The former idea is no better than a heathenish perversion of the latter; it is in its essence pantheistic, for it supposes God to be eternally as closely allied to evil as to good, and, by furnishing from his own nature the intelligence and the capacity which are necessary to human sin, to be Himself responsible for the moral ruin of his noblest work.

Again, it is entirely arbitrary to suppose that because God formed man in his own image He communicated to him his own attribute of immortality. It would be just as reasonable to assume that any other divine attribute was thus inalienably conferred on man; indeed, it would seem more natural to suppose perfect holiness to be intended by likeness than indestructibility. But why understand identity of nature or character? Likeness is not sameness. We have only to think of man's intellect, of his moral qualities, or his capacity for government, to recognise instantly, in contrast with all other mundane creatures, the image of the Creator.

Yet we think there is more than all this in the words, and that the further or entire meaning of them is suggested by St. Paul in Rom. 5., where he speaks of Adam as ' the figure of Him that was to come.' Historically the type precedes the antitype, but the order of the original design must be just the reverse. The type is made what it is in order to foreshadow that which is in to follow

it. Adam is to foreshadow Christ, which implies that Christ, not merely as the Son of God but as the incarnate God, is first before the mind of the Creator. Therefore Adam was as a whole, and in his bodily structure as much as in any other part of his nature, made in the image of God, who had from before the creation of the world designed the form of man in order to an incarnation which would be worthy of Himself.

But if the Apostle Paul suggests to us this honourable view of humanity, he marks it with a definite limitation.

The narrative of the Creation tells us of what man was made, how he was animated, and what was the whole result. ' God made man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Now, we have St. Paul's comment upon this last clause in 1 Cor. 15. 45. The words occur in a comparison of Adam and Christ, the object of which is to prove the superiority of the nature of Christ, to which believers are to be conformed.

In such a comparison it is obvious that all must be said which could be justly claimed in favour of the thing held to be the less worthy, otherwise the argument would be sophistically and false. Now, all that Paul knew as constituting the dignity of Adam, or the human nature of which philosophy speaks such great things, is included in the words ' a living soul,' which we have proved to be in no way suggestive of immortality; and the care of the Apostle to keep close to the inspired record in thus disparaging the mere natural man appears in his quotation of the idiom or peculiar Hebrew phrase of Genesis, which he turns into an exactly corresponding Greek form, doing violence to the language in which he was writing that it might reproduce without any alteration the inspired statement of Moses.

According to this, man was made-i.e., in creation, not by the fall-only a living soul (and the same words are unquestionably applied, as the margin shows, to other animals), while Christians receive a higher nature from Christ as a quickening spirit. Observe, the contrast is double-between soul and spirit, and between living and quickening or life- giving. What man had at first and at his best by mere creation was animal life, and even that he had no right or power of his own to communicate; while He who, in the scheme of redemption, takes his place as Head of the human family was a spirit able to quicken others into participation of his life. This agrees beautifully with the passage quoted above, from the fifth of Romans. Here, as there, we have at once the resemblance and the contrast of the rough and mortal forecast and the perfect and imperishable work.

As it is said in the apocryphal Book of Wisdom, God made man for immortality. We heartily accept this statement, but it is very different from the common one that God made man immortal. The eternal purpose is to be realised, not by creation, but by redemption-not in frail and faulty creaturehood, but by union with the sinless Son of God.

There is, indeed, in the record of Genesis something about ' living for ever,' the meaning of which we shall now consider.

' The tree of life in the midst of the garden ' was a provision for man in his innocence, and therefore needed by him in that state. He was denied the use of it as soon as he sinned, for God said, ' Now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever ' (Gen. 3. 22). Man therefore, while unfallen, had eaten of this tree, and if he had eaten of it afterwards the effect would have been the same. Therefore it is evident that the tree was an infallible provision for the maintenance of man's physical life, from the use of which he was cut off as soon as he became unworthy to live. The meaning, therefore, of ' living for ever ' in this first page of the inspired history of man is uninterrupted physical existence. Any other meaning put upon the phrase will, when carried through the narrative, result in an absurdity. Everyone must see that this first meaning, apart from clear statements to the contrary, will almost certainly be the one meaning of the Bible; and this probability is strengthened by the reappearance of the tree of life in the Revelation of St. John, where this familiar feature of the Paradise of God, restored to man by the Saviour, can hardly be understood to mean, in the closing scene of the Bible, something radically different from what it does at its opening.

Thus neither the creation of man nor his connections as described in the Book of Genesis prove human nature to have been originally immortal, but tend powerfully to establish the opposite conclusion. To man so constituted and so situated the Word of God came with growing clearness and fulness respecting life and death, the consequences of sin, and the hope of salvation.

CHAPTER 4.

THE SECOND LIFE.

We have observed that Scripture never asserts the natural immortality of man; but besides this negative testimony it furnishes much that is positive by statements which are incompatible with the popular theory. Thus man, whose resemblance to his Creator is supposed to involve participation in his immortality, instead of being compared to the eternal God and addressed as the heir of future ages, is everywhere contrasted as a short-lived creature with Him who can ' lift up his hand to heaven and say, I live for ever. ' There is, however, another contrast as strongly marked as that between the eternity of God and the brevity of human life, viz., the contrast between that same brevity and the longevity which is declared to be the portion of the righteous.

' Man is of few days and full of trouble;' he is ' crushed before the moth. ' He is ' but flesh, a wind that passes away and cometh not again.' ' All the days of his vain life he spends as a shadow;' and even in the light of the New Testament his life is ' a vapour that appeared for a little time, and then vanished away. But beside all these solemn declarations of God, or sad acknowledgments of man, lie the promises of continuance which meet the first craving of the heart under the fear of death. It will be said immediately that these promises are not promises of mere continuance, and that life as granted by God is more than existence. This is unquestionably true, but as asserted here it is misleading.

These promises contained much more than existence, but existence was the first and most distinctive boon held out to men who mourned over the shortness of life. Let us establish this by a few quotations. Thus length of days is repeatedly mentioned as the result of being in covenant with God, or possessed of the true wisdom (Deut. 30. 20, and Prov. 3. 2 and 16). The promise of the 61st Psalm is, ' Thou wilt prolong the king's life, and his years as many generations; he shall abide before God for ever:' and that of the 133rd Psalm is, ' life for evermore. ' The blessed way is ' the way everlasting ' (Psalm 139. 24), and only ' he that doeth the will of God abides for ever ' (1 John 2. 17).

Further, satisfaction is expressly promised in connection with length of life; thus (Psalm 91. 16), ' with long life will I satisfy him.' Now nothing experienced in man's past history has fulfilled this promise. Jacob counted his days as few and evil when he had lived 130 years, while the Greek sage Theophrastus, the literary executor of Aristotle, was in his sentiments a fairly representative Gentile when dying at the age of 107, ' lamenting the shortness of life, and complaining of the partiality of nature in granting longevity to the crow and to the stag, but not to man. ' Besides, no one could doubt that the continuance promised to the righteous would surpass that enjoyed by sinners before the flood, when the lives of many were prolonged through several centuries. But indeed there has been no perceptible difference of longevity in favour of the righteous.

So the Psalmist says (Psalm 49. 10), ' He sees that wise men die, likewise also the fool and the brutish person perish. ' Undoubtedly righteousness tends to life, because it leads men to submit to the beneficent laws of nature; but against this we must set suffering for righteousness' sake as martyrs and as workers, which will account for the premature end of millions who had and have an interest in the promise, besides the early death from natural causes of as considerable a number. To take an example from the kings of Judah, Saul, although rejected by God, reigned as long as David, who, in reference to the throne, was a man after God's own heart.

The reign of wicked Ahaz was longer than that of his godly son when the latter was summoned to prepare for death; and if Josiah occupied the throne for the exceptional term of 31 years, no less than 55 years was allowed to Manasseh.

Probably very few prophets, as very few apostles, reached the natural term of life; and yet to them especially, though likewise to all believers, belonged the promise of length of days and abiding for ever. Of every one of them might be said, as of the royal believer in Psalm xxi., ' He asked life of Thee, and Thou gave it him, even length of days for ever and ever, ' a statement which seems capable of but one reasonable interpretation, viz., that this promise of length of days or everlasting continuance is fulfilled not in this world but in the world to come-as Irenaeus, the honoured bishop of the church at Lyons, wrote within a century of the death of the Apostle John. The following are the words of Irenaeus, ' The Scripture saith of the salvation of man, " He asked of Thee life, and Thou gave him length of days for ever and ever;" the Father of all making a grant of continuance for ever and ever to those who are saved.

For life is not of ourselves nor of our own nature, but a gift of God's favour, and therefore he who possesses the grant of life and renders thanks to Him who bestows it shall receive length of days for ever and ever; but he who rejects it and proves unthankful to his Maker for creating him, and will not know Him who bestows it, deprives himself of the gift of duration to all eternity. '

The contradiction by appearances of this promise to the righteous, and of the threat of deprivation against the wicked, is strikingly marked in Eccles. 8. 12, 13: ' Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feared not before God. ' Thus in the experience of the wicked there is a prolonging of days, often to the surprise and perplexity of the righteous, followed by a not prolonging of days, which fulfils the threat and maintains the distinction of the Word of God.

If such expressions as length of days and abiding for ever could be overlooked, it would be vain to say with regard to these promises that God never offers bare existence to his people, and that life as promised by Him is something incomparably better than what goes by that name among men. This is unquestionably true and equally irrelevant. It has nothing to do with the question. Not only does God never bestow bare existence even of a physical kind, but it is impossible to imagine such a thing. Life, or as some prefer to call it Even in this connection, existence, is united with and dependent upon suitable surroundings and provisions. Before the Creator called man into being He had prepared for him the earth, the air, and the sea, with conditions and contents adapted to all the wants of his physical nature. To give life was unquestionably in the first place to bring into existence as an animated creature; but it was as certainly to bestow an interest in these things upon which life depends.

Thus the very poorest receive of necessity much more than the breath of life, and it is because life as given by God does normally and generally assure to its possessors so many things besides that men cling to it in spite of much misfortune, and that they regard

it as worthless and are apt to throw it away when it appears to them hopelessly dissociated from surrounding good. Thus life is existence with active or latent consciousness, but it has, except in circumstances tending to its destruction, a treasury of powers and enjoyments.

No one thinks of criticising the common mode of speech respecting bodily life, or of forcing into its definition reference to the capacities or connections which determine its value.

To live is to retain present being in this world, and to die is to lose the same; much more is involved on both sides, but it is in the way of accompaniment or consequence. This is well understood, and in special cases will be expressed, but it does not come into or affect the definition of life itself.

In exactly the same way we believe the higher and future life to be spoken of in Scripture. It is endless existence based upon immortality of nature which comes to man through the incarnation of God, but it has its qualities and connections and pleasures corresponding with those of physical existence, and yet as much inferior to these as the immortal life itself is nobler than that of the perishing body.

Thus we have seen running through the Old Testament a promise of life to the dying, of life long enough to satisfy man who craves for immortality; and to the simple meaning of this promise the only objection which we have met results from a confusion of thought respecting the being and the having of life, and can no more be applied to our interpretation of Scripture than it can to the language which the objectors use themselves in common with their fellow- men.

We shall now consider more particularly the statements of the New Testament respecting life and immortality.

These are said to be ' brought to light by the Gospel;' therefore we may confidently expect in the pages which explain and apply this truth, clear information respecting man's nature and destiny. What then do we find? First, as in the Old Testament, the absence of any assertion of natural immortality, absence even more significant here than in the earlier revelation. We have not, however, to notice the absence of the word immortality, and to conclude that for some reason, perhaps inscrutable, God was resolved to say nothing of that about which man had inquired so much.

Immortality-the familiar word of Greeks and Jews, or rather the idea expressed by two words equally familiar-appears not a very few times in the New Testament. But it is to declare that ' God only hath immortality, that He is ' the King eternal, immortal, invisible; that not philosophy, with its guesses in the dark, its lofty fancies, and its endless contradictions, but the Gospel that humbles man before it exalts him, has ' brought immortality to light; that men who understand the possibilities of their nature ' seek for... immortality by patient continuance in well-doing,' and that in the resurrection of the just the corruptible must put on incorruption, and the mortal must put on immortality. How in the presence of these declarations it has been possible for Christians to maintain a belief in the natural and universal immortality of man, we are quite unable to understand.

Secondly, we find in the words of Christ and His Apostles, quotations of Old Testament threats and promises with evident reference to the world to come, and as sufficient to exhibit under the new dispensation the wrath and the mercy of God; and thirdly, the reappearance of the particular promise of continuance which we have lately considered in the Old Testament, and which Peter (1 Peter 1. 22-24) declares to be a characteristic of the Word of the Lord, and therefore of its fruit, in contrast with all that is flesh or is of flesh, and which John not less clearly notes (1 John 2. 17) as the blessed distinction of him who is on the side of God, while the world and all that it has produced is passing away.

But we cannot so briefly deal with the passages of the New Testament which speak expressly of the believer's life.

They claim fuller examination, not because they are obscure, but because they are so prominent in the teaching of Christ, and because the evidence which they furnish appears to us irresistible in its confirmation of the simple sense in which we have interpreted the word. Christ came to fulfil the law and the prophets-to realise the hopes of a future life which the types and predictions of the Old Testament had encouraged.

He came also as the Desire of all nations, the full answer of God to the cry of man, the infallible Teacher whose words were to supersede all tentative philosophies.

Thus, whether Jews or Gentiles, men had reason to expect from Christ plain speech with reference to the hopes and fears which their respective systems of truth or error had occasioned. At least they might be sure that He would speak in their own language, and that as they had been on the one hand reckoning on a divine promise of length of days for ever and ever, and on the other had been darkly speculating about man's hope of immortality, ' the Light of the World' would not leave them in obscurity or perplexity, or add to their difficulties by using their familiar words in a sense which they had never known, thus ignoring the most reasonable exercise of man's mind and the deepest anxiety of his heart.

And if his relation to the Jewish and Gentile world made it necessary for the Teacher of all to retain the common meaning of life, or to announce its insufficiency and the substitution of another, this necessity was confirmed by his contact with the Pharisees and Sadducees, who divided between them the religious education of the Jewish people, asserting, in mutual contradiction, the

immortality of all Israelites and the groundlessness of all hope beyond the grave, and making it necessary for the Truth to contradict them both, and to declare that man was neither doomed to destruction nor destined to immortality, but that life eternal was a possibility to be realised by faith in the Son of God. [For a full statement of this argument see ' Life in Christ, ' by Rev. Edward White, chap. 16.] It is in the Gospel by John that we have the greater part of Christ's recorded teaching on the subject of life. Let us examine it. The first statement (chap. 1. 4) is that ' in Hini was life. ' This is evidently one with the life mentioned so often afterwards as intended for man, and this meaning is obvious in the text itself; but if any wish to see this more clearly, they may do so at once by laying beside these words of the Gospel the opening and closing statements of the same Evangelist in his first Epistle. From these it is unmistakably plain that the life spoken of as in Christ, and so called the eternal life, is the life communicated to believers, for ' this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son, and he that hath the Son hath the life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life. Now, no one, while considering this life as in Christ before and during His manifestation, will define it as holiness or happiness, or any combination of qualities or possessions, however they may dwell upon these as characteristics of his life. When considered in Him it is recognised as self-existent, imperishable vitality, and therefore it is necessary to regard it in the same way when thought of as communicated by God to man.

In the third chapter, we have the Lord's comparison of the salvation He brings, to the healing of the Israelites when bitten by fiery serpents. The boon conferred on them included deliverance from pain and restoration of the sensations of health; but it was chiefly life to the dying, and therefore the grace most obviously suggested in connection with the uplifting of the Son of Man was the gracious restoration of forfeited life.

In the fourth chapter, the eternal life is made to depend upon living water, and so contrasted with the evanescent existence, not happiness, which depended for its renewal on earthly wells, and often failed in the hot countries of the East for lack of water.

In the fifth chapter, Jesus takes occasion, from the cure of a sick man at the pool of Bethesda, to declare his power to quicken the dead, which He says He will do at last, and even now to bestow everlasting life on those who believe upon God through Him. Here, again, the occasion suggests, as the first meaning of life, a new right and power of existence which can shake off and hold itself free from the encroachments of disease and death.

The discourse of the sixth chapter respecting the bread of life was occasioned by the miraculous feeding of the multitude, and developed through a reference made by some of Christ's hearers to the manna of the wilderness which they credited Moses with having brought down from heaven.

Now not only does the comparison which Christ institutes between his spiritual provision and material bread to people who were fainting with hunger, and who consciously depended upon the latter for the continuance of bodily life, suggest imperishable existence as the meaning of the life He offered; but the recurrence of terms expressing continuance and only continuance, put this meaning beyond reasonable doubt.

Thus, when first turning the thoughts of his hearers from the earthly to the heavenly food, Christ says (verse 27), ' Labour for that meat which endures unto everlasting life, ' and when afterwards contrasting the effect of the wilderness bread and that which He offered (verses 49, 50), He says, ' Your father did eat manna and are dead: this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die;' and again, ' If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever;' the contrast of these clauses referring solely to continuance, which on one side is that of an earthly generation, and on the other that of the life of God.

We might similarly show that the idea of the tenth chapter is eternal continuance in contrast with the destruction illustrated by the ravages of wolves and robbers, and that in the eleventh chapter the opened grave of Lazarus was made to suggest in the same sense the life which Christ would bestow in resurrection. Finally, the teaching of the twelfth chapter is yet more explicit, for after comparing his own course in death and resurrection, to which that of his people must be conformed, to the changes of a grain of wheat which dies and rises again in a nobler form, He adds words to which we can attach no meaning without understanding them to refer to the question of the continuance or non-continuance of existence; for He does not say he that loveth his life shall lose what is more important than life, or even life in another and more important sense, but 'He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hated his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal.' Thus the natural and, as it appears to us, the only possible primary meaning of life throughout the Gospel of John, which is our chief authority upon the subject, is the principle of imperishable existence in contrast with the present life of dying men, being independent of circumstances and superior to all the forces of evil which can be directed against it. As this life everlasting is revealed first of all as the life of the Son of God which has become possible to us because He is also the Son of Man, information respecting the qualities and the activities of that life with which Scripture abounds would seem hardly necessary to assure us that all belonging to it is worthy of its eternal duration, and that perishing sinners may reasonably be content with the boon of eternal existence by participation in the life of the incarnate God.

We are not forgetting that among the words of Christ are found some which are usually understood to imply the everlasting continuance of the wicked, and therefore to be irreconcilable with all that we have shown to be his apparent meaning throughout the Gospel by John. Those words refer to final judgment, and they will therefore be considered when we come to the subject of ' the second death. ' But there is one passage, viz. Luke 20. 36, which claims attention in the present chapter, because it has been quoted by two theologians of some note [Rev. J. H. Hinton and Rev. J. Baldwin Brown.] as directly asserting that mankind after the death of the body cannot die any more.

But for the quotation referred to, we should have thought it impossible that an attempt should be made to extract such a meaning from these words of Christ, so clearly do they appear in the light of the context to teach the very reverse. But before examining the passage, we may ask whether it is credible that God, who had in the beginning declared death to be the penalty of sin, and who at the end of his revelation shows the destruction of sinners in the lake of fire, as the second death, should by the lips of Christ have said of sinful and perishing men, ' neither can they die any more. ' Let us, however, recall the circumstances by which the words were occasioned. Some Sadducees, wishing to embarrass Christ, proposed to Him a question respecting the resurrection. They did not believe in the resurrection at all, but they supposed it as it was believed in by others in order to force Christ to an absurd conclusion. Now the resurrection which was universally believed in by the Pharisees was that of the righteous, and however some of them may have held, or however Christ may before that time have distinctly taught, the resurrection of the wicked, that was a part of the subject which could not be utilised by them, for they could not have inquired about marriage in Gehenna.

And as we see in their question reference to but one resurrection, viz. that of the righteous, so we see the same yet more clearly in the reply of Christ. Not only did He speak of resurrection from the dead, which in Scripture has a more restricted and more blessed meaning than resurrection of the dead, but He expressly indicates the distinction of such resurrection by the words, ' they which shall be accounted worthy of that world [Literally that age.] and the resurrection from the dead.' Now the word which is rendered ' shall be accounted worthy, ' is a very strong one of rare occurrence. It is used, however, in the corresponding verse of the next chapter in the exhortation to the disciples, ' Watch ye therefore, and pray always that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man. ' It is simply incredible that such words should be used with reference to the wicked and the inevitable resurrection to judgment, and it is not less incredible that such should be described by Christ as ' equal unto the angels, and as the children of God, being the children of the resurrection. ' Therefore it is beyond all reasonable question that the Lord spoke on that occasion of the righteous only, and that He declared it to be their distinction that they should not and could not die any more. But the dying so spoken of had reference to the successive deaths on earth of all the supposed family and the consequent changes of relationship, so that the words must imply that the wicked who have not this distinction do die once more in a sense analogous to that of this world.

Thus the whole teaching of Christ respecting life, as it is recorded in the Gospels, appears to us clearly and consistently to represent imperishable existence as the great gift which He came to bestow, a gift which will ever be associated with circumstances and conditions worthy of itself and of Him who is its divine author and source.

Let us now listen to the Apostle Paul. His writings abound with references to life, but it is in the Epistle to the Romans that we have his full and argumentative statement respecting it. He commences his argument by proving that all men have by their evil deeds incurred the doom of death -a doom recognised as just by the conscience even of the heathen (1. 32). "Coming in the fifth chapter to an historical survey of the effects of sin, he shows that its great consequence, universal and constant, has been physical death, and it is in the place of, and in contrast with this death, that he represents eternal life in connection with righteousness established by Jesus Christ, who stands to those that obey Him in the relation in which Adam stood to the whole human race.

Now, if we ignore here the common meaning of life, and substitute for it the knowledge of God or any mere qualities or conditions, we destroy the antithesis and the whole argument of the chapter, and suppose the Apostle to have elaborated a contrast which is only verbal and deceptive, because there is no relation or ground of comparison between death as it has passed even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression,' and the knowledge or holiness or happiness which we are told is intended by life. Thus life in the fifth chapter of the Romans can have no primary meaning but the opposite to the historical, universal and visible death of human experience.

But it will be said this statement is invalidated by the Apostle himself in the next chapter, for there death is clearly spoken of in some other than the simple and natural sense, and therefore life may be so too. In answer to this, we observe that however death may be spoken of in the sixth chapter, unless the objector is prepared to put the same meaning upon it in the fifth (where death is expressly distinguished from sin as the consequence of it), the objection can have no force, for it is with death as it has been, and not as it may for another purpose be afterwards represented, that the eternal life of chap. 6. is set in contrast. But more fully to dispose of this objection, which to some appears very considerable, and which may be brought up in other connections, we freely recognise the secondary uses of the words life and death; but it is just because the primary meaning of these words is so strong and plain, that they may often be used without explanation in an exceptional way. Thus with a bold and expressive figure of speech the Egyptians, while the plagues were bursting in succession upon them, cried out, ' We be all dead men! And thus, too, the capital sentence of the law against sinners may be regarded as carried out in the case of those who by faith identify themselves with Christ, so that with the clearest retention of the simple meaning of death, they can say with relation to law they are dead to sin. [Or by sin, as some read, meaning that sin was the cause of their sentence, and the execution of it upon the person of Christ.] Indeed this view of death results very naturally from the simpler view presented by the fifth chapter.

The Apostle is applying the great truth that we are saved by grace, through union with Jesus as our federal head. Misunderstanding this, some would say, ' Let us continue in sin, that grace may abound; but the reply of the Apostle to such is a reminder that we can have no interest in Christ short of union with Him, and that such union must be in his death, so that every true believer reckons himself to have died in Christ, and so to have accepted God's judgment upon the old life in respect to which he henceforth counts himself a dead man, that he may claim and live in the experience of a new life which has been secured for him by the resurrection of his Lord. Thus, this passage affords not so much a secondary meaning of death and life as a forensic or judicial application of the first, the connection of the eighth and ninth verses alone putting this beyond a doubt, and the frequent

recurrence of such passages in the New Testament is an inevitable consequence of the great evangelical doctrines of the relation of Christ to his Church.

These two thoughts, or, as we may say, this double thought of the actual death of our federal Head and its consequences, judicially and spiritually, of our being counted and counting ourselves done with the old life, as dead men would be, and enjoying a new life in the risen Christ, runs through the seventh and eighth chapters of this Epistle, in which, even when the Apostle seems most mystical, he is preserving the primary sense of life and death as necessary to the other senses which flow out of this. Thus he says anticipatively (8. 6), ' to be carnally minded is death,' which is not more true literally than that ' the body is dead, ' verse 10 (though immediately afterwards called mortal), both statements being intelligible and strongly expressive while we remember the terribly simple sentence of death which lies upon the flesh and those that live according to it. The reason why to be carnally minded (in its ultimate tendencies and therefore according to its essential character) is death, is, ' because the carnal mind is enmity against God, ' and cannot be subject to the law of God. It is therefore doomed, as a thing irreconcilable with the Divine Government, through opposition to which it is ignorantly acting as its own executioner.

The thirteenth verse exposes with special clearness the primary meaning of life and death: ' For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. ' Here the dying and living are both future, the expression of the former clause being more exactly 'ye are about to die,' which it is equally impossible to refer to the present state of carnal persons, often spoken of as spiritual death, and to the death of the body which is a matter of common expectation to them and to the righteous. Thus the peculiar dying of sinners, as represented here, is exclusively future; but the living of the righteous is not so, for it is not said to them ' ye are about to live,' but simply ' ye shall live, ' which, while it expresses a blessing distinct from conditions or qualities, is consistent with the truth that in a measure, through union with Christ, they live already.

This last example is also one of many in which the life everlasting is presented rather as a thing to be reached at the last, than as a thing of present experience. In the teaching of Christ, the water which He can give springs up unto everlasting life ' (John 4. 14); the meat which He offers (John 6. 27) ' endures unto everlasting life. ' The way He points out (Matt. 7. 14) leadeth unto life, even as the other way leads ' unto destruction; and the chief reward of faithful discipleship is ' in the world to come life everlasting ' (Luke 18. 30). The language of the Apostles corresponds with these words of the Master. Thus Paul (Rom. 2. 7) represents eternal life as the prize of those who patiently seek for immortality. [This seems almost a quotation from Prov. 21. 21,] Thus he speaks (2 Tim. 1. 1) of the 'promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,' and writes to Titus (1. 2) ' in hope of eternal life,' repeating the thought in the third chapter by describing us as ' heirs according to the hope of eternal life; thus (Rom. 6. 22) he says the end is everlasting life, and thus, vividly representing it as the possibility of the future, he exhorts his ' own son in the faith ' (1 Tim. 6. 12) to ' lay hold on eternal life,' and a few verses afterwards charges him to convey this exhortation to others.

It is true that the Apostle John, who also says ' This is the promise which He has promised us, even eternal life, represents that life in the same Epistle as in some sense a present possession, for he wrote it that we ' might know that we have eternal life, ' and this recalls the words of Christ as reported in his Gospel, ' He that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. ' We are not more sure that these passages are alike correct, than that each class bears testimony to a particular truth. Those which speak of a present possession of eternal life, refer to what believers have in Christ either as their judicial representative or as the source of their power; while those passages which deal with our remaining necessities, our interests, and our hopes, present eternal life as designed by God to reside in and glorify us individually, when the work of his Spirit in us shall be fully accomplished. In neither of these views can eternal life be knowledge or anything else than the principle of imperishable existence. It is ours in Christ while we are still dying creatures, to become ours by individual experience when this ' corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality.'

CHAPTER 5.

RESURRECTION.

RESURRECTION, as a fact, constitutes the most momentous and significant incident of the past; as matter of anticipation it is the most blessed or the most awful of the certainties of the future. By the resurrection of the past, we mean the resurrection of Christ, and by the resurrection of the future, that of mankind at large. Individuals have already been raised from the dead, and some such instances occurred even in Old Testament times; but these, in their temporary and partial significance, were as really connected with the purpose and grace of God, which found its great expression in the resurrection of Christ, as were the spiritual experiences of those early ages, and therefore they do not present any difficulty or call for any separate consideration.

To those who have been carried by the sure words of revelation over the difficulties of belief in a resurrection of the body, it would seem as if the suggestions of nature would of themselves have led many to some anticipation of this part of man's destiny. The periodical out bursting of vegetable life from the icy bonds of winter, the springing of fruit and flowers from the seeds which perish in the ground, and the transformation of the seemingly lifeless caterpillar, wrapped in its cerements, into the winged butterfly, with its gorgeous beauty, present changes sufficiently analogous to that of resurrection to make us ask how it is that they did not occasion so much as a general inquiry respecting the possibility of a restoration of the material part of man. The answer is

in the apparent impossibility which connects itself with all natural thoughts on the subject, and which only passes away before the belief, unknown to the heathen, in the grace of an omnipotent God. Thus regarded from the standpoint of philosophy, the doctrine of the resurrection was incredible, and therefore foolish, while Resurrection. 53 in the very few traditional systems in which it held a place, it was rather a dim fancy than a belief, and was probably an imperfect echo of a primitive revelation.

It has been said, indeed, that the revelation of the Old Testament contains no clear assurance on the subject of resurrection. If this were so, the silence would strangely disagree with the historical incidents of resurrection to which we have referred. But Old Testament believers were not left to infer from these the doctrine of a general resurrection.

Our Lord Himself has declared that only ignorance of those Scriptures and of the power of God prevented any from seeing that there must be, at least for the righteous, a future life of body as well as of spirit; for ' that the dead are raised up Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob: for He is not a God of the dead, but of the living. ' Nor did Christ offer this as the only kind of proof afforded by the Old Testament. It was proof of a kind to be found in every part, without which the whole Bible would be void of meaning; but it was selected by Him doubtless because furnished by the books of Moses, of which the Sadducees recognised the authority, while they refused the same acknowledgment of the writings of the prophets.

The references of these latter to a future resurrection are clear, if not numerous. Passing by the remarkable utterances of Job (19. 25, 26), which might be objected to as incorrectly translated or hardly agreeable in our version with other words of the patriarch, we are arrested by the hope of the Psalmist (Psalm 49. 15) that God would redeem his soul (or life) from the power of the grave, and by the predictions of Isaiah (26. 19), Ezekiel (37. 1-14), and Daniel (12. 2). If it be said that the two former of these predictions and others of the same class only indicate a national revival under the figure of a bodily resurrection we reply that the figure, to serve this purpose, must have been familiar, or reasonable, and that it could only be so through a general expectation of a physical resurrection. But the words of Daniel are too explicit to be misunderstood: resurrection is by them an ' awaking out of the dust of the earth to everlasting life.' There is however in these passages something more than statements of a resurrection to come. There is more or less clear reference to a distinction in favour of the righteous.

And, indeed, taken by themselves, these words of the prophets would seem to deny or ignore the resurrection of the wicked. Thus Psalm 49 sets the redemption from the power of the grave, on which the believer reckons, in contrast with the end of the men of this world, who are like the beasts that perish. Thus in Isa. 26. the exultant cry, ' Thy dead shall live, (as) my dead body they shall arise, follows the asseveration, ' They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise. And thus the words of Daniel, which at first sight appear to refer as much to the resurrection of the wicked as to that of the righteous, and to represent them as simultaneous, are understood by some of the most competent critics to indicate a distinction rather than a common experience, and to mean that the many who awake from the dust at the time described will do so to everlasting life, while those who do not participate in this experience remain behind for ' shame and everlasting contempt.

The clear statements of the New Testament respecting the resurrection of all, and its special references to ' the resurrection of damnation ' (or judgment), may seem at first to contrast strangely, and to be inconsistent with these Old Testament pictures of resurrection. But the apparent inconsistency vanishes on closer examination, and the difference proves to be only one of degrees of light. The older revelation was made especially, though not exclusively, to a nation, and national rewards and punishments must be earthly and temporal. Hence direct statements respecting a future life would not be relevant to the law of Moses; while such indirect yet conclusive statements as that quoted by our Lord to the Sadducees must have abounded in any communications of God with moral agents respecting character and duty. The prophets, too, had to deal with the same people and their national behaviour and interests, though they were afterwards the messengers of God to the world at large.

Their words referred both to Israel and to mankind, to the immediate and to the distant future, to the circumstantial deliverance needed by their times and to the ultimate deliverance from all evil which it served to typify. There was little occasion for Evangelists and Apostles to speak or write in this way. The New Testament is not indeed without examples of such predictions, but the general reason for them was removed when the Scriptures were approaching completion, and the gospel of salvation, with its sanctions of promise and penalty, was sent forth into all the world.

Let us see how in these latter the distinction dimly marked by the prophets reappears.

Our Lord, according to Luke 20. 35, a passage which we have lately considered in part, spoke of those who should be ' accounted worthy of the resurrection from the dead. ' This expression alone proves that the New Testament means by 'the resurrection from the dead,' only the resurrection of the righteous. Standing by itself, such a passage seems strikingly to agree with the statements of the Old Testament above quoted, especially with that of the 26th of Isaiah, by ignoring the resurrection of the wicked. But it is the same speaker -the Lord Himself-who elsewhere, in clear and emphatic language (John 5.), asserts that there will be a general resurrection, and particularly a resurrection to judgment. How do we reconcile these statements? By observing that in the former Christ did not speak of the resurrection of the dead, but of the resurrection from (or from among) the dead. The same expression occurs in several other places. St. Paul uses it (Phil. 3. 11) when he says, ' If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead.' Thus the Old Testament speaks of the resurrection of the righteous as if it were the only one because it alone is a boon, and the other is not worthy to be named beside it; and the New Testament, in the passages referred to, mentions only one

resurrection, and that the subject of Old Testament prediction, but implies, by the very distinction which characterises that resurrection, acquaintance with another.

This same separateness of the better resurrection is made apparent by the words of Christ (Luke 14. 14), ' Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just, ' and by the thrice-given promise of (John 6. 39, 44, 54), ' I will raise him up at the last day. Other passages make plain the nature of this distinction. By some it is shown to be the first resurrection. At the second Advent ' the dead in Christ shall rise first (1 Thess. 4. 16), preceding the Chris 56 Resurrection.

tians who are then alive, and leaving behind them the dead who are not ' in Christ. ' ' Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection ' (Rev. 20. 4, 5). Those who participate in it live and reign with Christ a thousand years, while the rest of the dead live not again till the thousand years are finished. This resurrection is also in its nature a physical transformation which is inconceivable in connection with wickedness and judgment. In it the Lord Jesus ' will change our vile body ' (or the body of our humiliation) ' that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. 3. 21).

For ' it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power ' (1 Cor. 15. 42, 43). It is equally impossible to apply the word glory to the future state of the unregenerate dead, and to separate that word from those which in the context are associated with it, so that the exclusive application of these terms to believers is obvious, and equally so the illustration which they afford of the splendour of that resurrection which is distinguished by incorruption and immortality.

Now if we reverently inquire from the Scriptures why the dead are to be raised, we shall see them expose to us one cause and two reasons. We must consider these separately.

The cause is in all cases the operation of God. Jesus Christ as the God-man could say of his human life, ' I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. ' He not only was raised, He rose from the dead; and it was by this rising in his own right and might from the dead that He was declared to be the Son of God with power (Rom. 1. 4).

Thus no mere creature being dead could raise himself again, or would rise again because of any inherent qualities of his nature; and to suppose so would be to invalidate the Apostles' proof of the Divinity of Christ. Man therefore rises not of necessity, but because God wills that he should rise, and because God is able to quicken the dead.

But this truth contains a decisive argument against the doctrine of man's natural immortality. Man is not a soul or spirit which may or may not inhabit a material body. Man, according to the divine record of creation, is as much body as soul; and however he may perish by degrees, the body decaying first and the soul (whatever its ruin be at present understood to mean) being exposed to destruction afterwards, the soul without the body is not the entire man any more than the body without the soul. Thus the supposition of a natural immortality for man, as the Scripture represents him, includes that of a necessary resurrection; but the idea of a necessary resurrection is unscriptural, dishonouring to Christ, and transparently absurd, and the doctrine of a naturally immortal humanity comes under the same condemnation.

'This consideration will have little weight with those who see nothing incredible in the eternal survival and indestructibility of one and only one part of man; but to those who expect God's dealings to be to the end with the creature which He made, and who recognise a necessity for reward or punishment affecting the nature which has served or sinned, the fact that there is no cause for resurrection to he found in man himself, must draw with it the conclusion that there is not in man's nature any cause for a future life at all.

The cause of resurrection is therefore one, and is to be found in the omnipotent will of God. But the reasons for resurrection are very different in the case of the righteous and in the case of the wicked.

Resurrection is in all cases the work of Christ. This is plainly stated by Himself (John 5. 25-29), ' The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live; and again, ' The hour is coming in which all that are in the grave shall hear his voice and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. ' And this power which is necessary to the execution of final and universal judgment He expressly connects with His human nature, for He says, ' the Father hath given Him authority to execute judgment because He is the Son of Man.' Thus the resurrection of man being in no case a necessity of his nature, but taking place because God for wise reasons wills it, is effected by the Son because of his incarnation and consequent connection with all men. But this committal of the work of resurrection to the Son of Man suggests the reasons why the first and second resurrections are severally appointed.

We must consider these carefully and separately, for they have but little in common. The reasons for the resurrection of believers may for clearness be considered as judicial, moral, and experimental. Judicially, they must rise again, because Christ having discharged their liabilities, death has no right to retain them.

They are ' members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and as He, the Head, has passed through and triumphed over death, they must do so likewise. And therefore He has said to them, Because I live ye shall live also,' words which contain at least as

clear a proof of a physical resurrection as did those spoken at the burning bush, from which our Lord drew the testimony of Moses to that truth, and which at the same time gave the reason and the measure (or rather the measureless) of the future life of those who thus depend on Him.

In the second place, what we may call the moral reason for the resurrection of believers is indicated for example in Rev. 20. 4. There those that have been faithful unto death and that have resisted evil participate in the glories of the first resurrection: they are raised again obviously because they are morally fit, through grace on God's part and faith on theirs, to live in the world to come. They are by Him who judges every man according to his works ' accounted worthy of that world and the resurrection from among the dead.' This moral reason for the resurrection to life is also the one most apparent in the Old Testament, from which we may add to the examples already quoted the remarkable words in the Septuagint version of the 1st Psalm, ' Therefore the ungodly shall not rise in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. ' The third reason for the resurrection to life is experimental, that is, it arises out of a distinctly Christian experience. It is stated by St. Paul (Rom. 8. 11) in these words, ' He that raised up Christ from the dead shall quicken even your mortal bodies, because of his Spirit that dwelleth in you. ' The argument may be explained by the same Apostle's words in another place, ' He that hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. ' The Almighty quickening and preserving Spirit has been given to you: He is actually at work in you: therefore it is incredible that He should be satisfied without completely saving you out of all the ruin wrought by sin. You have bodies as well as souls-the ruin is physical as well as moral, therefore the Holy Spirit by whom God is saving you must effect a physical as well as a spiritual resurrection.

Now it must be apparent that none of these reasons for the resurrection of the righteous can be applied to the world at large. Why then does God will that the wicked should rise again? The Scriptures answer this question plainly: 'Because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained.'

Moral government is impossible without judgment, and simultaneous judgment of men (as distinguished from souls or spirits) is impossible without resurrection.

Therefore there is nothing arbitrary in the resurrection of the wicked, but a necessary preparation for the great assize-a simple recalling of men in the flesh, that having sown to the flesh they may of the flesh reap corruption, and as St. Paul says again with special reference to believers, but enunciating a principle of obviously general application, that ' every one may receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. ' Here we are inclined to think the Apostle, whose words are not quite so clear as those of the translators, is insisting rather upon the reception in the body of the things which correspond with the life than emphasising the occurrence in the body of the things which come into judgment. Indeed the context seems to require this view, for the argument of the Apostle is against the idea of being unclothed or disembodied, an idea much more familiar and credible to the Greek mind than that of resurrection.

If men are ever to be judged as men-that is, in the flesh, so that suffering may correspond with sinning-the only alternative to a general resurrection is full and exact retribution in this life; but this is evidently impossible, because incompatible with any moral probation or exercise of faith. Thus a general resurrection is a necessary consequence of the co-operation of moral government and moral trial.

But in addition to this necessity there seems to us to be a judicial reason for the resurrection of all men. We do not speak with confidence upon this point, and our main argument is no way dependent upon it; but as we understand the Scriptures, they imply that the condemnation under which humanity fell in Adam is removed by Christ who 'is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world;' 'who is the Saviour of all men, and specially of those that believe;' so that ' as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, but every man in his own order.' Thus the full sentence of death will not be executed upon anyone because of Adam's sin. An arrest of judgment takes place on account of the interposition of Christ, and thenceforth the children do not die for the fathers, but everyone who ultimately perishes dies for his own sin, having been raised up from the death in which he was involved by Adam to stand or fall according as he has or has not secured immortality through Christ.

But not a few reply, If you grant the resurrection of the wicked, however you may account for it, you grant their immortality. We must bespeak the forbearance of our readers in quoting so unreasonable an argument. We do so, not because it is plausible, but because it is common.

Only the most superficial thinker could suppose that the reproduction of men in order to their being judged, involved the necessity of their continuing to live for ever. But probably the reason, if there be any, which supports this objection, is drawn from St. Paul's description of resurrection (1 Cor. 15. 42-44), wrongly understood to apply to the resurrection of all men. But as we have pointed out already, the resurrection there is to glory, although (verse 41)

to different degrees of glory, and therefore is obviously restricted to the resurrection of the righteous. Scripture says not a word about the resurrection of the wicked to sustain the idea, in itself so improbable, that they share the physical incorruptibility of the righteous.

We have shown that the reasons for their resurrection are altogether different from those which account for the resurrection of the righteous, and therefore it is most agreeable both with Scripture and with reason to understand the two resurrections to be

altogether different in kind as they are in purpose. The perfection of the bodies of the redeemed, which will be fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ, will be the crowning boon of grace as it is now the object of the believer's hope (Rom. 8. 23). To imagine such perfection (as it is inseparable from immortality) attained without faith and holiness, is to deny the distinctive character of the believer's hope with reference to his body.

Thus it is equally clear that the wicked rise, and that they do not rise to immortality. The final condition of body will with them, as with the righteous, correspond with and express the final condition of mind, while it will be suited to the bliss on the one hand, and to the suffering on the other, which have been respectively secured by holy and by sinful lives on earth.

Physical corruption will therefore reappear, probably in exact correspondence with the sins which have abused the body in a former life, but with a sufficiency of strength to endure the stripes, whether many or few, which justice must impose.

Thus the two resurrections will correspond with the double prediction in one verse of the prophet Isaiah (26. 19).

The saints shall arise as the body of Christ, but the earth shall cast out as an abortion [Bishop Lowth's translation.] the rest of the dead.

CHAPTER 6.

THE SECOND DEATH.

THE previous lectures must already have made plain the meaning which we attach to the word death in its final and most awful application. For if man was made only a living (not an immortal) creature, in the image, but not in the nature, of God; if long life has been set before him as an object of hope to be realised only by the righteous in the world to come, and if immortality is to be sought by patient continuance in well-doing, and attained at the resurrection of the just, while the rest of the dead, rising long afterwards, reappear in bodies of shame and corruption, the second death, which is the doom of the finally impenitent, must be the destruction or extinction of body and soul.

We shall, however, make this the subject of a separate examination and an independent proof, as we desire our representation of the truth of the future life to be like a vessel built in watertight compartments, each one of which is not only sound and seaworthy in itself, but is able in a great measure to sustain the rest.

The reason why death demands in connection with this subject an exact interpretation, is that alike at the beginning and at the end of the Bible it is represented as the extreme penalty of sin. The threat which accompanied the first law was expressed in the words, ' In the day thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die; and in the last scene of judgment presented by the Book of Revelation we see sinners cast into a lake of fire, ' which is the second death. ' To take a single example from the middle period between the extremes of time, the warning of the prophets may be illustrated by the utterances of Ezekiel, ' The soul that sinned it shall die;' ' Turn ye, turn ye; why will ye die;' ' I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, saith the Lord God. ' Thus in the beginning, middle, and end of revelation God Himself declares the final doom of transgressors to be death.

In determining the meaning of this word we have to choose between too familiar and strongly supported opinions.

One is that, as man is by nature immortal, or at any rate destined to everlasting existence, the second death cannot mean extinction, but must be interpreted as an eternal state of ruin and misery in consequence of separation from God. The other is that, as Scripture says nothing whatever about natural or universal immortality, there is no reason for understanding death in any other sense than as the loss of life by means and experiences which may be infinitely various. The latter of these opinions is the only one compatible with what we have already advanced, and we shall proceed to prove that it, and it only, is agreeable to the teaching of the Bible.

It is usual with many persons to settle this question for themselves, and to answer all the objections or arguments of others by reference to some single text of the New Testament, as for example, ' These shall go away into everlasting punishment,' or ' Their worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched. ' The language of one such text appears to these persons so plain as to preclude the possibility of further reverent inquiry. Now it is unquestionable that to those occupying their standpoint, having believed from childhood in the immortality of the soul and the endless torment of the wicked, such words as these must appear to stamp the familiar doctrine with the seal of Divine authority, but it is equally certain that from the standpoint of the Unitarian who declines to look beyond the words ' My Father is greater than I,' the doctrine of Christ's divinity appears to be disproved by a disclaimer from his own mouth, while many an otherwise reasonable Romanist finds his belief in what to us is the incredible dogma of transubstantiation supported by the Bible, because he only sees there the words, ' This is my body. ' Surely all students of the Bible have found some texts to have a meaning entirely different from that which they had previously attached to them, and this

experience, if nothing else, ought to make us seek a broad foundation in the Scriptures for all the articles of our creed, but especially for those which are of the utmost practical importance.

We are not going to shirk the texts in question, but to explain them in the proper place, and in the light of other Scriptures; but before doing this it seems to us most reasonable to inquire what God had previously said to man upon the subject of final punishment. Let it be remembered that man had no greater light from God than that of the Old Testament during 4000 years, that is, during two-thirds of the whole course of human history, and that for the greater part of that time he had no revelation at all beyond the promptings of the Divine Spirit in his conscience, and the traditions which might reach him of God's dealings with such favoured individuals as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham.

Even those whom we should have regarded as utterly ignorant of God and of their own destiny, were responsible possessors of a measure of truth, for ' He left not Himself without witness in that He did good and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness ' (Acts 14. 17); while the heathen who plunge into excesses of sensuality know the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death (Rom. 1. 32): thus, according to St. Paul, God took care that man should be warned even without the Bible, but how much more with it! And yet the Bible throughout the greater part of it, and until eighteen centuries ago, contained no warning of the danger of eternal suffering.

It is possible that some reader may be inclined to arrest us here with a quotation of two passages in the Old Testament which have sometimes been thought to imply the endless existence of the wicked. The first of these is the exclamation in Isa. 33.14, ' Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? [Lowth translates: ' Who among us can abide this consuming fire these continual burnings?'] Hardly any commentator or scholar will now attach another meaning to those words than that in which they were understood by Matthew Henry, who applies them to the conflagration throughout the country, caused by the Assyrian invaders, which terrified the sinners in Zion who had no means of resistance, but which would fail to harm him who walked righteously and spoke uprightly, whose place of defence would be the munitions of rocks, whose bread would be given him, and whose water would be sure. The second passage which may be brought forward is Dan. 12. 2, ' Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake,' etc. We have already shown that this may refer only to the resurrection of the righteous, when those that do not rise remain behind for shame and everlasting contempt. But leaving aside this view of the text, we can find in it no reference to eternal suffering. The contempt spoken of as everlasting is expressed by the word rendered abhorring in the last verse of Isaiah, and there applied to carcases, which must be insensible of shame. Thus we know of no word which can be brought forward from the Old Testament in even plausible support of the opinion that the final death of sinful man is a state of eternal misery.

And this silence of the Old Testament is more than the absence of evidence. It is the absence of what, if it were true, must have appeared there, even more than in the later part of revelation. The Old Testament contains the revelation of law with all its severity, the object of which was conviction of sin by declaration of the desert and consequences of sin, that men might be ' shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.' It may be said that the argument of Heb. 10. 28, 29, leads to another conclusion, for there, ' He that despised Moses' law ' and ' died without mercy ' is contrasted with the rejector of Christ who exposes himself to incomparably ' sorer punishment.' But as we have already pointed out, the law given to Israel was at once civil and moral, national and universal, and the penalties attached to it were correspondingly of two kinds, present and future. The promise of life was not generally fulfilled to the righteous here, nor was the threat of death generally executed against the wicked. But yet righteousness claimed life before those who sat in Moses' seat, and the claim was allowed by all worthy successors of Moses, while death was the penalty of obstinate transgression.

Offence against the law, as Moses' law, was dealt with at once and severely, by an earthly tribunal; but this, while it furnished a visible and familiar illustration of the inexorableness of law, was not identical with the moral and final judgment of God as made known to the consciences of men at the same time. Israelites were apt to think the rejection of the authority of Moses the greatest of crimes, but the Apostle here assures them that disobedience to Christ is incomparably worse than that civil offence with the desert of which their Scriptures had made them so familiar. Such disobedience corresponded not with the offence against Moses, which was punished visibly with the death of the body, but with the far more heinous offence of heart-rebellion against God, of which the penalty was deferred to the day of judgment, while the guilt, identical in kind with rebellion against God in all ages, was aggravated by the fact that it was committed under the light of a fuller revelation. Further, it is worthy of special notice that the Apostle finds the proof of this later and more terrible judgment to which the rejectors of Christ expose themselves in the words of Moses (Deut. 32. 36), ' The Lord shall judge His people;' and again (Heb. 12. 29), in view of the final shaking of earth and heaven and the awful danger of refusing Him that speaks from heaven (verse 25), he can bring forward no consideration more apposite or terrible than that furnished by another word of Moses (Deut. 4. 24), ' Our God is a consuming fire.' Thus the Old Testament is recognised by the New as declaring the final consequences of sin, while it contains not one word suggestive of the idea of eternal suffering.

How this comparatively modern theory can be reconciled with the fact of God's silence and man's ignorance respecting it for 4000 years, including the years of law and prophetic denunciations, we are unable to imagine. But this consideration, although very weighty, furnishes only negative evidence. We have to add to it the positive evidence of the Old Testament that death in the sense of destruction, and not in the sense of conscious ruin and misery, is the final penalty of sin.

We may confidently assume that Adam fully understood the meaning of God's words when He said, ' In the day thou eats thereof thou shalt surely die.' A threat is such only as far as it can be understood. To suppose God to have meant by death eternal misery, while He knew that no such idea was conveyed by his words, would be at once to insult Him and to outrage our own moral sense. How then did Adam understand these words? He was a sinless being with a clear and unbiassed mind; but we do not know or suspect that anyone has even so much as suggested that Adam saw included in death the horrors of eternal torment.

To him, therefore, death as experienced by all other earthly creatures, was familiar from the beginning. He, the Vicegerent of God upon earth, was the honoured exception to this otherwise universal law, maintained in perennial vigour by the influences of the tree of life. He saw death to be the loss of life, accompanied generally by suffering, which was infinitely various in its forms and degrees. This man is warned that if he transgresses he must die, and we ask in what sense he would understand the threat. Can there be two answers to the question? Can there be a reasonable doubt that Adam would understand the penalty of transgression to be loss of his life by an experience of suffering analogous to that which he saw taking place around him?

But undoubtedly two difficulties, at first sight considerable, present themselves in connection with this reasonable view.

One is that Adam lived long after the day of his transgression, and the other is that we all recognise in the final destruction of a man more than the death of an animal. If we had to leave these difficulties in all their apparent force, they would not justify us in resorting to the alternative opinion that when God threatened death He meant immortality in misery. But we do not see anything insuperable in these difficulties. By very ancient authorities, and by commentators ancient and modern, ' Thou shalt surely die ' has been understood to mean ' Thou shalt be subject to death, and as Scripture is written, not in rigidly accurate, but in conventional language, this may well be the meaning of the words. But a more exact interpretation is agreeable with facts. If on the very day of his transgression man was doomed to death and cut off from the provision by which previously life had been sustained, then the experience of dying commenced that day. We sometimes speak of all men as dying creatures, and say that we begin to die from the moment we are born. These statements are strictly correct; but inasmuch as we know nothing better than the condition of our early years, we do not realise the life-long process, but only the final and more terrible phases of death.

It is probable, however, that Adam, who had known the sensations of physical perfection, was conscious in the first day of his fallen state of a change, which assured him of the presence and operation of death. And it may be worthwhile to repeat the suggestion of another, that as the only days previously mentioned are now understood to have been great periods of time, and as a thousand years are with the Lord as one day, it is by no means certain that Adam would understand the terms of the threat to refer to the space of twenty-four hours, while it is interesting to notice in connection with this thought that neither Adam nor any other man prolonged his life through one of the Lord's days of a thousand years, though that term was very nearly reached by him and a few of his immediate descendants, probably by reason of the recent connection of their physical nature with the tree of life.

The second difficulty, arising out of the fact that man has more to lose than the beasts, and that the death of his body is not his end, may be as satisfactorily, but not as quickly, disposed of. Perhaps it must in part remain until the teaching of Scripture respecting the second death is made clear by a fuller examination. We may, however, at once point out that neither justice nor reason demand that the threatened death should have been intended by God or understood by Adam to be identical with that of other creatures, while they both require that it should be analogous or similar to it. Death could not in all its known illustrations mean destruction of nature and ceasing to be, and in the threat a change of condition or relationship compatible with immortality. It must have been understood in the sense of loss of life by a process involving, at least probably, degradation and decay, and this is exactly what we believe all Scripture, taken together and self-interpreting (and a vast number of independent passages), declare the doom of sinners to be, while the interposition of Christ, annulling the doom of Adam and making all partakers of a resurrection, and the probation of men with respect to the Gospel, account for the vast parenthesis between the first and the second deaths, and the postponement of final execution until the great judgment-day.

The two chief features of the Mosaic economy in illustration respectively of government and grace, were capital punishment and animal sacrifice. These had a common element and, we may assume, a common purpose. They alike represented death as the penalty of sin, while sacrifice added the truth of redemption through the death of a substitute or representative. We have seen what must have been the impression first made upon man's mind by the threat of death. Is it not equally clear that this impression must have been confirmed alike by the severity and by the grace of the following dispensation, in which everything was divinely arranged to convince of sin and to prepare for the clearer light of the Gospel?

Thus far the doom of sinners appears only in one view, and is susceptible of only one interpretation, though from the beginning it must have been obvious to faith that the complete and penal death lay outside of the scene and beyond the term of earthly life. But from this point the language of Scripture respecting this final death becomes various by the use of many illustrations, the effect of which must be, if they are allowed their natural force, to make clearer than ever the judgment of God against sinners.

Thus by Job and David, and Isaiah and Hosea, the wicked in their final state are compared to chaff before a storm of wind. They are broken ' like a potter's vessel ' (Psalm 2. 9); they ' consume away as a snail that melted ' (Psalm 58. 8), or are driven away like smoke, or melt like wax before the fire (Psalm 68.2), or are burnt like the fat of lambs upon the altar (Psalm 37.20), or are as the food of moths and worms (Isa. 51. 8). Indeed, the Old Testament closes with such words of judgment. Its last page represents scepticism expressing itself in the question:

Where is the God of judgment?' and God Himself replying:

' I will come near unto you to judgment... Behold the day cometh that shall burn as an oven, and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch; and then turning to the righteous, the God of judgment adds: ' Ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this.' It is impossible to doubt the sense in which this prophecy would be received by those to whom it was first addressed. Its application to final judgment, and its description of the manner of that judgment, are alike unmistakable, and, therefore, if some other meaning is to be put upon the words, it can only be by supposing at the end of the Old Testament, as at the beginning of it, that God's words were more a riddle than a revelation, and that the strongest language was used to describe what was comparatively unimportant- temporal death, national calamity, or the chastisement of some generation yet unborn-while the infinite horrors of eternal suffering to which all sinners were exposed were not only passed over in silence, but were studiously concealed.

We But it may be said we must get our theology rather from the New Testament than the Old, and the teaching of the New Testament respecting the doom of the wicked is clear and decisive. We think so too, but in another sense.

have seen the teaching of the Old Testament to be clear and decisive, and we know that it is confirmed and amplified, not contradicted, by the New. The first thing which strikes us in passing from the one to the other is the reappearance of the very illustrations of final destruction with which the older revelation has made us familiar. Not only is the doom of death plainly reasserted and declared to be understood as just even by the consciences of the heathen (Rom. 1. 32), but the same perishable things and the same processes of destruction are referred to in exposition of the fate of the ungodly. The first example of this is afforded by the words of John the Baptist (Matt. 3. 10, 12). John was at once fulfilling in part and referring to that final prophecy of the Old Testament to which we have lately given our attention, and it was manifestly because he recognised in Jesus Christ the Coming One of Malachi that he described the casting into the fire of the fruitless trees and the burning of the chaff. The word unquenchable, which occurs here in connection with the fire, may be thought to introduce a new element, but it is nothing more than a very strong expression applicable to earthly fire, being so used both by Homer and by Eusebius (in the latter case with reference to the burning of martyrs), while it is as much a quotation of Old Testament thought as is the comparison of the wicked to fuel or to chaff; for God had said by Jeremiah to the rebellious Jews (17. 27): ' If ye will not hearken unto me Then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched. It will be most convenient to mention here that the expression ' that never shall be quenched ' in Mark 9. 43 is not only repeated several times without authority, † but is the arbitrary translation of the same single word, which need not mean any more in that passage than in the utterances of John or of Jeremiah.

Here, however, as we touch upon the teaching of Christ himself, we are sure to be reminded that his words are the most terrible that have been spoken concerning the doom of the wicked, and that they appear to be in irreconcilable opposition to the view which we have so far sustained. Let us consider this objection. It is based, for the most part, upon the passage last mentioned, and upon the single expression everlasting punishment of Matt. 25. 46. But our Lord's teaching abounded in references to final judgment, and therefore it would be strange to find his exact meaning in one, or at most in two, without reference to the others, especially if the one or two will bear another interpretation by which they would be brought into manifest harmony with the rest. What, then, is the general character of Christ's references to the end of sinners?

It agrees exactly with that of the psalmists and prophets.

See also 2 Kings 22. 17, and Jerem. 4. 4; 21. 12.

See Dean Alford's ' New Testament. ' It may be said that our Lord referred in this passage exclusively to the impending doom of Jerusalem by the Roman army, but Luke does not deal with the separate Jewish interest; and even in the destruction of Jerusalem the impenitent did not all likewise perish.'

They are compared to tares which are burnt at the harvest; to bad fish thrown away when the nets are drawn; to fruitless trees hewn down and cast into the fire. When the Lord's attention was called to the slaughter of the Galileans by Pilate, he warned his hearers that if they did not repent they would all likewise perish; and He repeated his warning by a reference to those upon whom the tower of Siloam fell. So, reminding them of Isaiah's prediction respecting the stone of stumbling and rock of offence, He declared that on whomsoever it should fall it would grind him to powder.

There can be no doubt about the natural meaning of these comparisons or illustrations; and when, without such, the Lord uttered naked statements respecting the final judgment, they were, with a few apparent exceptions which we shall presently consider, of the same character. Thus He spoke of the world as perishing, and of the way of sinners as leading to destruction; and thus He warned His disciples not to fear those who could only kill the body, but to ' fear Him who is able to destroy body and soul in hell. ' It is important to note that some of the chief of the early fathers, alike ' orthodox ' and universalist-viz., Tertullian, Cyprian, Jerome, Augustine, and Origen-acknowledged in this last case that the destruction of the soul intended by Christ corresponded with the destruction or killing of the body.

To question this meaning is hardly possible; but some who see this endeavour to avoid the conclusion that future punishment consists in such destruction by observing that Christ speaks of what God can, and not of what He will do, which is to turn our Lord's words into an empty threat.

There are, however, three passages in the teaching of Christ which at first sight appear to contradict the conclusion to which we are led by all that we have hitherto considered.

These are the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16.), the words about the worm and the fire in Mark 9., and the expression, ' everlasting punishment,' in Matt. 25. 46.

Terrible beyond our appreciation is that parable which represents the torment of the self-indulgent God-forgetting sinner; but it makes no reference to eternity. A fixed and impassable barrier is indeed declared to separate the abode of the righteous from that of the wicked; but the whole scene is laid while the once-rich man's brethren continue to live on earth, and therefore before resurrection and before the judgment. It is most natural therefore to understand it as picturing the torments of conscience the intolerable remorse-with which every impenitent sinner will be afflicted as soon as he is withdrawn from the temptations and deceptions of this sensuous life, and as affording no information respecting the duration of that final agony which will accompany the destruction of body and soul in hell.

With reference to the second of these passages, we have already observed how, by the exaggerated rendering and unwarranted repetition of the word ' unquenchable, ' an emphasis has been laid upon this utterance of Christ which does not belong to the original. That it is a peculiarly solemn utterance is unquestionable, nor have we inclination or motive to forget this; but we do not honour Christ by putting upon his warnings the most awful meaning imaginable, but by seeking that which is most true. Now in seeking this meaning we must observe what seems to have escaped the notice of all who see in this passage a revelation of endless torment, viz., that the words of Christ, far from being original, would have quite a familiar sound to the ears of his Jewish audience, and further, that they already had attached to them a very solemn but reasonable meaning, which is not disturbed by any new thought to which Christ gave utterance. The words in question are quoted from the last verse of the book of Isaiah: ' they shall go forth and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh. ' Thus, without controversy, the awful words of Christ are applicable to carcases or dead bodies, for they were so applied in their first use; and further, an interpretation of this passage had been drawn by the Jews from the same prophet, and from Jeremiah, who, in various parts of their prophecies had marked out Tophet or Gehenna as a cursed spot where they should bury until there was no more to bury, and where a great pile should be kindled by the breath of the Lord. To state this fact on the authority of an ' orthodox ' commentator, we shall quote from the article on ' Hell ' in the ' Bible Cyclopaedia ' of Mr. Fausset. There, having observed that Gehenna is strictly ' the valley of Hinnom,' the author describes it as- ' a deep narrow glen, south of Jerusalem, where, after Ahaz introduced the worship of the fire gods, the Sun, Baal, Moloch, the Jews under Manasseh made their children to pass through the fire and offered them as burnt offerings.

So the godly Josiah defiled the valley, making it a receptacle of carcases and criminals' corpses, in which worms were continually gendering. A perpetual fire was kept to consume this putrefying matter: hence it became the image of that awful place where all that are unfit for the holy city are cast out (a prey to the ever-gnawing worm of conscience from within, and the unquenchable fire of torments from without). ' It will be observed that the clause which we have enclosed in brackets is an entirely gratuitous addition, expressive of the author's ' orthodox ' opinion, but in no way springing out of the facts which he has stated or easily to be reconciled with them. Thus it appears that the most natural sense of these words, bearing in mind their connection with the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah, is not everlasting torment but utter destruction, like that of the offal of carcases cast into Gehenna, which perished by the double agency of worms and fire, the former representing their inherent corruption, which even in this life shows its power to destroy, and the latter the infliction of the wrath of God, which in the cause of justice, and in the interests of the heavenly city, hastens the destruction of that which is irreclaimably bad.

One more difficulty remains in connection with the teaching of Christ upon this solemn subject: it is that of the words, ' These shall go away into everlasting punishment. ' We have remarked in an earlier chapter that it is generally admitted that the word translated everlasting is very variable in its meaning, and that the nature of the thing spoken of must determine its value in any particular case. This fact has led some candid believers in endless misery to give up the word everlasting as affording them no sure basis of argument.

Others, however, adhere to it tenaciously, and many are still satisfied with this single text as set in the balance against all that Scripture must appear to say respecting- conditional immortality and utter destruction.

We are often reminded that the same word is used to express the duration of punishment and the duration of blessedness, nay, even the eternity of God Himself, and the inference derived from this fact is supported by the assertion that the secondary or limited meanings of everlasting are found in the Old Testament alone. The first of these statements is true, but without force against our position, while the second is demonstrably untrue. If the fact that the same word is used with reference to the eternity of God and the continuance of future punishment proves the eternity of the latter, what is proved respecting the institutions of the Mosaic law which were established by statutes, the everlastingness of which was constantly declared by the word which expressed the eternity of God? The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was not ignorant of the fact that each of these institutions was ' an everlasting statute,' and yet he argued that they were abrogated and superseded by Christ, and his argument goes to prove not that

they were in spirit perpetuated by Christ, but that they were a temporary and even parenthetical provision brought in between the priesthood of Melchizedek and that of his great successor Jesus Christ. Now it is obvious that whatever can be said in support of the eternity of suffering on the ground of the last-mentioned argument might have been said by Jews zealous for the law against St. Paul, supposing him to have written the Epistle to the Hebrews. And no doubt some did say on this very ground that the apostle blasphemed Moses. But our Christian opponents are not of this opinion, and therefore justifying Paul they must justify us unless they have other and better reasons for holding us to be faulty.

We have denied the assertion that everlasting in the New Testament has always the boundless sense of eternity, and we shall give our reasons for doing so. In 2 Tim. 1. 9 and Tit. 1. 2, we have in our version the expression, ' Before the world began.' Read strictly according to the original, it would be ' before eternal times. ' The words eternal times have the same value retrospectively and prospectively, and that value is here distinctly limited by a mark of time earlier than their beginning. The end of these eternal times seems as certainly though indefinitely marked by the two statements that Christ's kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and that at the end ' He shall deliver up the kingdom to God even the Father. ' Thus it is not true that in the New Testament and even in the realm of spiritual things, everlasting always carries the meaning of eternity. Indeed, the passages which we have last quoted suggest, if they do not actually assert, that a vast parenthesis of ages is marked off from the eternity which in its past and future is comprehensible by God alone, and that within this vast succession of periods which seems to us as wide as eternity, the whole history of man is included up to the end, when Christ shall win his final victory, and his redeemed shall pass with Him beyond the limit of the ages, partakers of the holiness and the immortality of God.

But while we believe this to be the truest meaning of eternal with reference to all human interests which do not merge in the divine, we are far from dependent upon this interpretation for a solution of the difficulty proposed in the expression everlasting punishment. If anyone insists upon the strongest meaning being attached to the former word, we can afford to yield the point, for we believe that in fact the punishment will be eternal. It will be the loss of eternity and of the infinite bliss of heaven-a punishment eternal in its effect, as redemption and judgment are in Scripture said to be eternal, and no more to be limited to the time of its process than is the earthly punishment of the man who is put to death and so deprived of years of happy activity to be limited to the hours which intervene between his sentence and his execution.

But there is yet another sense which seems to us to underlie this word, not as an alternative, but as an addition to either of those we have examined. Eternal is put in contrast with temporal as the higher with the lower, the spiritual with the earthly, and eternal rewards and punishments are called such, not only and perhaps not chiefly with reference to duration, but with reference to the great extra-mundane scene in which they are dispensed.

If thus Scripture itself teaches us that we may interpret everlasting punishment so as to bring that expression into harmony with all its earlier declarations respecting man's perishable nature and its exposure to the second death, what reason can we have for hesitating to do so? Unless we seek a foundation for so tremendous a doctrine as that of endless woe in the very last book of the Bible, and among the scenes of the Apocalyptic vision which no one will dare to interpret with confidence, and unless further we can find satisfactory proof of eternal torment in another world in the declaration first made (in Isa. 34. 10) respecting the land of Idumea, and thence adapted to another earthly scene (Rev. xiv.) in connection with the fall of the mystical Babylon, we shall find no word in the writings of any of the Apostles to disturb our conviction that the doom of sinful and unregenerate men is the destruction of a literal death.

Paul, with all his insight into the deepest mysteries and his uncompromising maintenance of the sovereignty of God, has no word to say about a state of torment, though he speaks clearly and solemnly of ' everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. ' Peter is content with the idea of the Psalmist (Psalm 49.), who compared men of the world to the beasts that perish;' but he clothes that old idea in language more forcible than it had ever worn before, as he writes, These, like natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, shall utterly perish in their own corruption.' Jude sees in the destruction of the wicked a repetition of the fiery judgment which destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah; for those cities he declares to be set forth (as they could only be in the narrative of Scripture, and therefore in respect to past history) affording in their experience of divine vengeance a sample of eternal fire; while John, silent in his Epistles, like all the rest, respecting the hell of theology, confirms the belief which the rest have established by all that he says respecting the eternal life and the assurance, which includes the Church and excludes the world, that he that doeth the will of God abides for ever. ' We find, therefore, but one opinion possible respecting the Second Death if the whole Scripture is to speak to us in the common sense of language, and as its own interpreter.

Fully recognising the secondary uses of death and destruction, which correspond with those of life, and are to be accounted for in the same way, we fail to see, and we deny that there is, any authority or reason for putting upon death or destruction the meaning of eternal existence in misery. The more we search the Scriptures the more clearly and emphatically do we perceive them to teach that immortality is a divine attribute only possible to those who become partakers of the divine nature, ' that man's only reasonable hope of immortality is in Christ, who is the Incarnate Life; and that, although his union with humanity gives Him authority to raise all men from the grave, and the postponement of the general judgment makes such a resurrection inevitable, the end of those who do not participate in redemption is the loss of the life they have the destruction of body and soul in hell with such a harvest of sorrow as will correspond with the seeds of sin.

CHAPTER 7.

THE MORAL TENDENCIES OF THE TWO BELIEFS.

We might now leave the subject as settled by the result of a candid examination of the Scriptures, but we shall make one further inquiry on account of objections which are often urged against the doctrines of conditional immortality and the literal destruction of the wicked. This final inquiry will have respect to the moral tendency of those doctrines as compared with that of the established belief in universal immortality and everlasting torment.

Truth, as all truth-lovers know, may be trusted to do good, and only good, in the long-run, and therefore we might reasonably confine our attention to the question whether Scripture, which is proved to be the Word of God, does or does not teach the doctrines under examination.

At the same time, those who object to receive a doctrine, although unable to answer the Scriptural arguments in its favour, because of apparently strong evidence that it tends to immortality, do not occupy an altogether unreasonable position. They may justify themselves until they have time to make fuller inquiry by asserting that the moral evidence against the doctrine assures them that the argument from Scripture is fallacious, although they are unable to put their finger upon the fallacy. But we confidently assert that the moral evidence respecting conditional immortality is as decidedly in its favour as that which we have deduced from Scripture.

Proceeding to this comparison let us consider first the view which is still called ' orthodox. ' It is evident that some of its characteristics are such as to put it at a disadvantage in such a comparison; for, in the first place, the idea of eternal torment as the penalty of the smallest amount of unforgiven sin does painful violence to the natural sense of all men-a sense recognised by God in various passages to which we have alluded in the foregoing pages; secondly, it appears to contradict the revelation of God in nature which, though often terrible, is always beneficent, and which knows nothing of unmitigated suffering, though it exhibits the destruction of much that ceases to operate for the common good: thirdly, the general tone of Scripture suggests nothing at all resembling such infinite severity, while express declarations regarding the end of the wicked cannot, without violence to the natural sense of the words, be reconciled with it; and fourthly, the character and behaviour alike of Christ and of his Apostles are not suggestive of or apparently compatible with the idea that the world round about them was sinking down into the horrors of an eternal hell.

Such are some of the characteristics of the doctrine in question. Its effects must correspond with these, as, in fact, they too certainly do.

(1.) It diminishes or perverts the influence of Scripture by rendering the interpretation of it unnatural and uncertain.

(2.) It subjects the faith of those who think they see it in the Bible, and who concern themselves at all about its meaning, to a strain incomparably severer than that occasioned by all other difficulties in connection with the Word of God or the destiny of man.

(3.) It chills the heart towards God in proportion as it participates in his real nature of love, by representing his chief characteristic as an incomprehensible and limitless severity.

(4.) It oppresses all sensitive souls that believe it with an intolerable burden of woe, for which they can obtain neither relief nor reason from God Himself.

(5.) It hardens the hearts of many by compelling them to approve, because apparently divine, what otherwise their consciences would reject as the extreme of cruelty, and, by identifying severity with justice, fosters the spirit of persecution in the strong and of revenge in the weak, while in all it blunts the sense of pity by pressing for ever upon the mind the fixed necessity of eternal torment.

(6.) Although for a time spurring the preacher or the private Christian who really believes it to exaggerated words and deeds, for which no precedent can be found in the record of apostolic labours, its ultimate tendency is to paralyse effort, because human nature cannot long endure the tension of feeling which is demanded, and the burden of labour which is imposed, by such a view of the destinies of a great part of the human race.

The evidence of this tendency is always at hand. Of the larger number of intelligent and capable persons who profess to be satisfied with the doctrines of universal immortality and everlasting punishment, how small a number takes any active interest in the salvation of their fellow-men, either at home or abroad, or how very rarely is there found, even among the preachers and workers of this persuasion, a fervour of zeal or a tenderness of pity at all suggestive, not to say worthy, of a belief in the eternal torment of their fellow-men! This state of things is inconsistent, but not strange. The stoutest hearts cannot hope that their labours will effect any appreciable mitigation of the horrors of an everlasting hell, and therefore it is natural and almost inevitable that

they should relax their efforts in the presence of the infinite woe, which they are taught is the appointment of divine justice and love.

Such we believe to be the natural and actual influence upon Christian minds of what is called the orthodox doctrine of future punishment. But we have to take into consideration the influence which it exerts upon those who are not Christians, but who are otherwise well inclined towards Christianity. Let us consider first how this doctrine must appear to one who is acquainted with the Bible, to whom its prevailing tones of justice, and measured anger against sinners, and long-suffering compassion, are familiar. Can there be any doubt that to such the demand to believe that these same Scriptures reveal the penalty of endless torment for the sins of an ephemeral earthly life, will perplex the mind by its apparent contradiction of all with which Christian theology has connected it? The declarations of the love of God must seem very doubtful and strangely at variance with his deeds of vengeance, while the natural sense of a multitude of passages bearing upon the destiny of the wicked must appear to be outraged by the assertion of the everlasting continuance of sinners and of sin. To put the effect more generally, the meaning of God's Word can neither be simple nor certain. It must be full of contradictions and obscurities, and those who think earnestly will be apt to despair of drawing the truth for themselves from its ambiguous oracles, and either to seek relief from perplexity and responsibility in a blind submission to ' the Church, ' or to exchange all that is distinctive and authoritative in the Bible for the independent reasonings of nature. It was in reference to this latter danger, which cannot be ignored by any having the least acquaintances with the prevailing religious thought of Christendom, that Professor Sir James Stephen ['Destiny of the Human Race,' by Henry Dunn. p. 321.] described the doctrine of endless suffering as '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. ' If this is the effect of the doctrine in question upon those who know the Bible and who must be restrained by its divine influences even when driven to despair or revolt by its apparent inconsistencies, what will its operation be on the minds of the ignorant? Some, doubtless, will tremble before it without question and without reason, as they would have trembled before the denunciations of a Brahmin priest or a Mahometan mollah; but these are comparatively few, while the converts to righteousness, by unreasoning fear, are fewer in appearance and more than doubtful in reality.

But to those who have not come under the general influence of the Bible, and who cannot believe mere affirmations without evidence offered either to mind or conscience, the doctrine of an eternity of penal suffering, supposed to be taught by the Bible and to be an integral part of Christianity, must exert a repellent influence by its improbability, not to say its utter incredibility, and present an almost insuperable barrier between the Gospel and those who would otherwise be inclined to receive it. Indeed it seems to us that this medieval dogma still preserved in many of our creeds and in the traditions of the Church, is among the most powerful and reasonable causes of the open infidelity of our times. The process by which many minds arrive at a disproof of Christianity is doubtless both short and plausible. It may be represented thus. ' I do not know much about the Bible, and I have no inclination to study it; but I understand it to teach that the sins of a short life on earth, whether many or few, will be punished with torments through all eternity. This is incredible and monstrous, and therefore the Book which declares it is unworthy of belief.'

But a further evil may be traced to the same cause. The very foundations of morality are shaken in the minds of those who are thus, by theological inventions, constrained to doubt the divine authority of the Scriptures. Rejecting the incredible doctrine of unlimited punishment, they reject with it the divine sayings of law and threat with which it has been identified by the authority of the Church, and consequently the Bible is lost to them not only as God's message of salvation but also as a revelation of duty and of danger; and the result of the propagation during many centuries of the idea of eternal torment, is, naturally, the absence in the minds of multitudes of any sure and definite thought about the desert of sin, and the belief of others that, except the inconveniences occasioned by it here, no penalty is attached to it at all. Let those who doubt this account otherwise for the light hearted immorality of Christendom in the presence of the open Bible with its imagined warnings of an eternal hell.

We have now to represent candidly the moral influence and effect of the doctrine of conditional immortality. And first we shall recognise a fact which has been made to do much service by some on the other side. There are instances in which the abandonment of old traditions of eternal punishment has been followed by departure from evangelical and essential truth. Our own observation would lead us to conclude that such cases are extremely few, but doubtless they can be pointed to here and there. What then do they prove? If the immoral tendency of the doctrine with the reception of which began to be manifested a departure from the faith, the doctrines of the Reformation may be condemned with equal reason because of the follies and excesses of the German Anabaptists, the principles of Congregationalism because of the vagaries and moral faultiness of its earliest advocate, nay Christianity itself, by the damaging evidence of at least every second chapter of ecclesiastical history. But reasonable opponents will hardly need to be reminded that such instances, unless very numerous, prove nothing at all.

There may be no connection but that of accidental coincidence between these changes of opinion, or the connecting link may be, in minds to which the truth is more a theory than a power, the disturbance of long-established thought, which, alike in religious and political revolution, however legitimate and necessary, involves the danger of an excess of change to those who are not reverent and self controlled seekers for truth. To shrink from inquiry on account of this danger may be natural to timid spirits, but it is none the less a cowardly avoidance of one of the chief duties of human life, and it is in principle to protest against all reformation and to choose to remain in all the errors and superstitions which have been bound up with Christianity by the ignorance of the past.

We are, however, at a loss to see how the acceptance of Christ as the Author in every sense of the new life of humanity can endanger any article of evangelical faith.

The Divinity of Christ is necessary to such belief, for it is the incarnation of the Divine and eternal life which, according to it, secures to our nature a share in the immortality of God, and with the recognition of this union of God with man-of the eternal life with the life sin-spoiled and perishing- is naturally, and as it seems to us inseparably, connected the recognition of the atoning sacrifice of the cross, of regeneration, and of holiness through faith.

But we cannot be content with denying that there is evidence or ground of suspicion that our belief in Christ tends to apostasy.

With all seriousness and in view of what seems to us but too convincing evidence, we declare our conviction that what is called the orthodox view is sapping faith in God and in the Bible more than any other representation of Christian belief, and we know that souls have been preserved from the infidelity into which they were drifting under its influence by discovering in conditional immortality a way of escape from the incredible doctrine of an eternal hell. The following letter from Australia, written a few years ago, will furnish an interesting illustration of this fact:

' I return you Mr. Scott's work, " God Misunderstood, " with many thanks. I can assure you its contents have driven me from absolute infidelity.

I can now read my Bible with comparative understanding, and have read more in (I hope with profit) one week than I have in many years previously. I seem to have found a resting- place, a solid foundation, a demolition of inconsistent theories, and a clear light into the character of my God and Maker, and His crucified Son, Jesus Christ.

' I would recommend its perusal to any who are in similar doubt. Many, like myself, will rejoice and bless the influence that caused them to read " God Misunderstood." "

The effect of this change upon Christian minds is the relief and confirmation of faith-relief by the removal of an imagined necessity to believe what is incredible, and confirmation by the restoration of simplicity and certainty to the meaning of the Scriptures. It is, besides, a realisation of the judgment of God, as sure, righteous and terrible, and an enhanced appreciation of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who needed not to be moved to save us by a doom of eternal torments, which, if it can be imagined, might prompt and morally oblige any heart in which there was a spark of pity to do all that was possible, but who undertook the salvation of those that were literally perishing, and, in order to bestow the gift of eternal life, humbled Himself to union with a race of mortals; and it is further the clearing and brightening of the Christian hope of immortality and incorruption at the coming of the Lord, through the abandonment of the baseless thought of a natural or universal immortality, which would rob the crowning gift of Christ of all its glory.

Upon the world not less than the Church the doctrine of conditional immortality is calculated to exercise a salutary influence, and, however the distortion which it often suffers, perhaps through the ignorance of opponents, may furnish the idea of immunity from punishment to those who are seeking for excuses to go on in sin, the acceptance of it by mind and heart will result in a fresh realisation of moral restraint and the experience of new and powerful suggestions to holiness of life. For in the first place, the substitution of this view of future punishment for that of the everlasting torments of immortals, reconciles the threatening of the Bible with reason and conscience, which, however insufficient of themselves to determine the desert of sin, are intended to recognise and support revealed truth, and not to remain in perpetual alienation from it. The natural heart, informed that the penalty of all and any sin is eternal death, and that eternal death is eternal existence in misery, if it thinks about the statement at all, will in most cases think of it as absurd or as unjust; but if, on the other hand, it is told that the end of a life of sin is destruction, with a measure of accompanying suffering exactly proportioned to the evil deeds done in the body, conscience and reason alike acknowledge the justice of the threat, and the sinner, who before found in the incredible severity of the law encouragement of the hope that it would never be put in execution, is forced to agree with God in the condemnation of himself. In the light of this doctrine of exact and reasonable retribution, according to which man perishes because he judges himself unworthy of eternal life, and suffers only but fully the wrath which he has been treasuring up for himself against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, the indulgence of sin becomes manifestly the luxury of a fool, the sport of ' a madman, who plays with firebrands, arrows, and death. The vague idea of the infinite evil of every sin, which sets eternal torment before all alike, irrespective of degrees of guilt, fails as a deterrent not more because it is rejected or at best doubted by the moral sense, than because it has used up at the beginning all the terrors of justice and has left no definite additions of penalty to connect themselves with subsequent sins. But it is difficult to imagine that anyone could knowingly transgress with the light-heartedness which is so constantly seen in connection with a profession of ' orthodoxy,' if really convinced that every particular sin drew after it a sure consequence of suffering.

The view of human nature which this doctrine presents is doubtless very humbling, and therefore distasteful alike to speculative philosophers and to the traditionalists of the Church, but it extends the hand to earnest though incredulous science as Christianity has never done before, while firmly and consistently maintaining in its simplest sense the divine revelation of the Bible. That it humbles man is far from being a proof that it is not of God, while its exaltation of Jesus as the source and giver of immortality-as in every sense the saviour and preserver of the human race-shows it in honourable harmony with the most glorious doctrines of the Bible and of the Father's supreme purpose of honouring the Son.

Thus it appears to us that this doctrine of life in Christ not only bears the test of reference to moral tendency, but shows itself under the fullest examination to be a doctrine worthy of the Bible, and of all its holy purposes with regard to God and man. It adds to the revelation of redeeming love by withdrawing the idea of a constraint which would have allowed to a beneficent Being no alternative but to save, and it deepens the voluntary humiliation to which He stooped in assuming the nature of mortal men. It serves as an effectual instrument in the difficult but necessary work of abasing human pride, and shutting man up as helplessly dependent upon Jesus Christ. It preserves and harmonises the evangelical doctrines of the Cross by making absolutely and manifestly necessary the central one of the incarnation of the divine and eternal life. It divides sharply the Church and the world as those who have and those who have not a reasonable hope of immortality, and it draws without exception under the sentence of death all that belongs to the first life, and constrains to a realisation of the new humanity through an exclusive faith in the Son of God. It recognises, in addition to the common doom of death, the guilt and penalty of every transgression, and therefore maintains a vigorous hold upon the conscience of the sinner, and abandoning the unreasonable strife of theology alike with science and with moral sense, it acknowledges the facts which each is competent to discern, but holds itself ready to add to each either the reasonable penalties of an outraged law or the long-coveted immortality which is the revelation of the Gospel.

In conclusion we appeal to our readers to treat this question with the seriousness which it deserves. No more important subject can engage the human mind, nor can we think of a more faulty levity in a professor of religion than that which turns aside from it as unimportant. It is sometimes said, and that by charitable persons in the interests of peace, that if we believe rightly with regard to the way of salvation, it matters little what opinion we hold about immortality or future punishment. This is true only if our personal salvation is everything to us, but if we have any zeal for the glory of God; if we are concerned for the harmony of truth; if we would help to relieve hearts that know the love of Christ, and struggle hopelessly to reconcile with it the idea of an eternal hell; if we would restore the moral sense of man to the place which the Scriptures have assigned to it; if we would see the greatest of stumbling-blocks taken out of the path of inquirers-the doctrine which makes Christianity incredible removed from before the face of the heathen world-then we must recognise our obligation to seek sure and definite truth respecting the life and death of the world to come, and only to turn away from the doctrine of conditional immortality, which offers to meet this need in every part, if after an honest examination we find that it does violence to the Word of God.

It is a reproach against intelligent Christians, and especially against Christian preachers, that they have no opinion upon this stupendous theme. No man can honestly plead lack of time, for everyone who seeks first the kingdom of God finds time to read the Bible, and on this subject, as well as on every other, the Bible will sufficiently interpret itself to a candid and careful reader. We are the disciples of Him who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, and who said, ' If any man serve me, let him follow me. ' We have no choice with regard to the truth which God puts within our reach but testimony or disloyalty.

There are many witnesses to truths, selected according to taste, or interest, or public recognition, for one witness to the truth. And if any testimony be more important than the rest, will it not be that to truths which are forgotten or denied? If this doctrine is not of God, let it be exposed and condemned; but if it rests upon the foundation of Holy Scripture, let not the strong men and women of the Church refuse to acknowledge it until it is re-established before the conscience of the world by the testimony of babes.

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