

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

AND

ETERNAL DEATH;

www.CreationismOnline.com

AN ESSAY.

BY

JAMES WILLIAM BARLOW, M.A.,

FELLOW AND TUTOR OF TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, ROBERTS, & GREEN.

1865.

PREFACE.

THE Dogma which assigns Everlasting Life in Fire, as the doom awaiting the vast majority of the human race, forms a difficulty which may be regarded as unique in the commonly received system of Christianity. It is, in fact, differenced in two most important respects from every other difficulty. In the first place, the doctrine in question is, from the side of Ethics, exposed to assaults of such resistless force, that its defenders, in the arena of that science, must either retire precipitately from the field, or hold their ground by the use of unlawful weapons—arguments which are based on the reversal of the rudimentary axioms of Morality. And, in the second place, its mere statement as an Article of Faith, wrenches from our hands the master-key, by means of which most of the other formidable difficulties

which are found in the Inspired Book, may be reduced to insignificance.

That this doctrine of Eternal Punishment is now actively at work in undermining Christianity itself, is the firm conviction of the present writer; and this conviction—whether it be well or ill grounded—must serve as the apology for the following Essay. The civilization of the nineteenth century jars with a belief in everlasting torments to be inflicted by the All-Merciful on the creatures of His hand. Every one who is acquainted with the writings of the modern Theist and Infidel, is at once struck with the irresistible force which their objections assume when directed against this particular item in the popular creed. I believe that the doctrine, as it is commonly taught, is untenable; and that those generally well-meaning writers who loudly proclaim that the New Testament is irrevocably committed to it, and who attempt, on Ethical grounds, to justify the infliction of such a sentence, have given a more deadly wound to the Christian faith, than all the rancorous hostility of the infidels of the last century was able to effect.

The Eternity of Future Punishments has been, in truth, the immemorial doctrine of the great majority of the Church, but at no period of her history has the influence of such doctrine been so energetic for evil as it is in our own days. It is now—sometimes openly, but much oftener in secret—driving out thousands from us into infidelity; and it is, beyond all question, THE great repulsive force which prevents the alien from entering within the Christian Pale.

The main design of the following pages is to show that, with respect to the Futurity of the Wicked, the *real* doctrine of the Bible is not, as is too commonly taught, opposed to Reason and Morality. Admitting that the statements of Holy Scripture as to their fate, are beset with *difficulties*, I hold that, even here, no *contradictions* are to be found between the authoritative teaching of Revelation and the deliverances of Reason and Conscience. In the third chapter, where I have considered the ethical bearings of the doctrine of eternal punishment, frequent reference will be found to two sermons preached in the Chapel of

Trinity College, Dublin, and since published with an Appendix, by Dr. Salmon. In these sermons he has presented the ethical arguments for the defence in a remarkably condensed form; and I have, therefore, in enunciating them, usually quoted his words.

Trinity College, Dublin,
December, 1864.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. The Question Stated	1
II. On some Consequences of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment	13
III. On the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment considered in relation to Ethical Science	30
IV. On the Scriptural Evidence for the Doctrines of Eternal Punishment and Eternal Death	65
V. On the Scriptural Evidence for Finite Punishments in Another Life	106
VI. On the Causes which have led to the prevalence of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, as an Article of Faith in the Christian Church	117
VII. The Abolition of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, considered as to its probable effect on Morality	125
VIII. The Abolition of the Doctrine of Eternal Punishment, considered in reference to the Evidences of Revealed Religion	136
<hr/>	
Appendix. Note A.—On the Ethics of Vicarious Suffering	146
Note B.—On a Fixed State out of Time	161
Note C.—On the Testimony of the Apostolical Fathers to the Dogmas of Eternal Punishment and Eternal Death	168

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT AND ETERNAL DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

THE QUESTION STATED.

FEW who concern themselves at all about religious matters, and who reflect on what is daily passing around them, will be inclined to dispute that the Church of England has now approached a crisis in her history; one which, in importance, may perhaps be ranked as second to none of those through which she has already passed in safety. And this impending crisis is of such a nature as to invest the question concerning the Eternity of Future Punishment with peculiar importance. Terrible as, through all time, such dogma must have been, the progress of modern civilization has certainly had the effect of bringing forward, with a clearness unknown before, those objections which, on ethical grounds, may be urged against the infliction, on a finite sentient being, of so tremendous a sentence as everlasting, and therefore infinite, torments. The dogma, before comparatively latent, *now* stands out in glaring relief; and thus imperils the very existence of a creed which demands its acceptance, as being a vital article of faith.

The writer of an able critique in the *National Review*,* has not hesitated to speak of Eternal Punishment as "the one great question of the day—all other doubts, perplexities, and fears, being merged in it, and bound up with it." And he has not over-rated its importance: the most tremendous question that created intellect can start, is, I am firmly convinced, indissolubly bound up with it,—the question of the goodness of that awful Being, who framed the Heavens and the Earth.

But, before going any further, I must accurately define what I mean. It is not the question of Future Punishment after death; it is not the question of Eternal Death itself; but it is the question of Everlasting Life in Sin and Torture, as the doom awaiting a large portion of the sentient creation of God,—which is really at issue. This must be carefully borne in mind. The three dogmas, that of Future Punishment, that of Eternal Death, and that of Eternal Punishment, though usually confounded, are perfectly and totally distinct. The proof of either of the former is *not* a proof of the latter; nor would the disproof of the latter afford the slightest grounds for even doubting either of the former.

Now, although this question of Eternal Punishment must be, to *every* individual, one of extreme importance, it is nevertheless true that the *consideration* of the question, and the acquisition of right views respecting it, are matters of immensely more importance to some persons than to others: upon this point I shall make a few remarks, as I can thus point out the object I had in view in writing the following

* For January, 1863.

pages, and at the same time indicate those for whom they have been mainly designed.

The Christian world, if considered in reference to the effect which the doctrine of Eternal Punishment produces upon it, may be distributed into three classes.

I. There are those who, having calmly and deliberately considered the question, find no peculiar difficulty in admitting the proposition that the immense majority of the human race are destined to writhe in torments, and to blaspheme the name of Him who made them, through endless ages. Comprised under this class we find men of very various opinions;—varying indeed from the pious and worthy man, of whom the worst that we can say is, that he has allowed the First great commandment of the Law unduly to overshadow that Second which is *like unto it*,—to the atrocious blasphemer, in whom the moral sense has been obliterated, whose conscience has been seared with a red-hot iron, and who dares to ascribe to his Creator, the motives and acts of a fiend. Still, much as these persons differ in the scale of morality, they all agree on one point. They have all maturely reflected on the doctrine of eternal punishment, and they are all satisfied with that doctrine. To their minds it presents no especial difficulty; and to them, accordingly, this essay is not addressed. I have not a single word to say to any of them.

II. Another class,—a very large one, most likely even now the largest of the three, may be shortly described as consisting of those who have never thought about the question at all. These, indeed, profess their belief in Eternal Punishment; they are quite familiar with, and freely make use of, the expressions ‘hell,’ ‘eternity,’ ‘the lake of fire’; but, to them, such expres-

sions are empty words; the ideas they should suggest are wanting. Like those in the former class, their minds are untroubled, but the source of their tranquillity is thoughtlessness alone. Now for such persons, so long as they continue in this peaceful state, any discussion of the doctrine of Eternal Punishment would be superfluous. But their peace of mind, based upon mere thoughtlessness, is liable to be suddenly and rudely disturbed. One who is deeply loved is called, without a moment's preparation, into eternity. Words, which before were only words, are at once invested with a tremendous meaning. The question "Has the lost one passed to undying pain?" must be answered one way or other, and the mourner passes rapidly into the third and last class, which still remains to be noticed.

III. This class, though not, as yet, comprehending as many as the second, is already numerous, and is daily and hourly increasing; and each successive advancing step in the moral progress of the human race, will assuredly bring it large additions. It consists of those in whom the careful consideration of the question has resulted in the conviction, that the awful doctrine of the Eternity of Future Punishment is not only apparently inconsistent, but is in direct contradiction, with the attributes of the all-merciful God. But they have been taught from childhood to believe that the New Testament is irrevocably committed to this doctrine; they are therefore driven to the terrible alternative of either rejecting Revelation altogether, and, with it, abandoning their hopes of immortal life, or of falling into a still deeper abyss of wretchedness by doubting their Creator's goodness. These are they for whom the consideration of the

question of Eternal Punishment is of all-absorbing moment, and it is to these alone that the following pages are addressed. I can truly say that should they be the means of helping any one individual out of the difficulties which weigh him down, my labour will not have been in vain.*

As applicable to the case of all Christians arrived at years of discretion,† the doctrine of Eternal Life and Death, taught as "orthodox" by nearly all classes of Protestants, may be very shortly stated. Each individual passes at the instant of death either to a state of unutterable and inconceivable happiness, or to a state of unutterable and inconceivable misery. This happiness and misery, respectively, shall indeed receive vast augmentation in the day of final judgment; but it is to be distinctly understood that the only change which is possible after death, is the communication of more transcendent joy in the one case, and the infliction of acuter suffering in the other. Up to the moment of dissolution, even for the most hardened sinner, there is a possibility, perhaps even a hope, of repentance; but the parting breath stereotypes the character for ever. The church of England does indeed teach that the disembodied spirit continues in conscious existence, but we must hold that the mercy of God, through Christ, can only be applied to the soul while it remains in union with the mortal body.‡

* To render this threefold division strictly logical, I should first have made two classes and then sub-divided one of them. But the arrangement in the text is more convenient for my present purpose.

† I here leave out of consideration the future destiny of the heathen, and that of young children dying unbaptized, for in both of these cases, the orthodox doctrine appears to be indeterminate.

‡ An instance of the extraordinary extent to which this theory is sometimes pushed, may be found in one of Latimer's sermons. He

And, further, we must be careful to remember, as an integral, and most essential part of the doctrine, that those who are landed by death in the regions of eternal woe, form the immense majority of the Christian world; perhaps I should say, the immense majority of the human race. This, I repeat, is a point of vital importance, and, in discussing the question of Eternal Punishment, should never be lost sight of. And yet it is generally slurred over.* But there is no evading it. If the words of Christ pronouncing the sentence of eternal damnation are plain, His declaration that those who tread the broad and easy path which leads to death are the many and not the few, is no less so. And His explicit declaration is backed by our own observation and by the unwavering voice of history. This then is the orthodox doctrine—a few shall pass at death to endless joys, and the great mass—of Christendom certainly, of the human race possibly,—to everlasting agony and despair.

is speaking of the execution of Admiral Seymour in the reign of Edward VI. In those pre-guillotine days, the sentence of decapitation was sometimes very clumsily carried out, and the unhappy Seymour received two strokes of the axe before his sufferings were over. Whereupon Hugh Latimer, improving the occasion—"As touching the kind of his death, whether he be saved or no, I refer that to God. In the twinkling of an eye He may save a man, and turn his heart. What He did I cannot tell. And when a man hath two strokes with an axe, who can tell but between two strokes he doth repent? It is hard to judge. But this I will say, if they will ask me what I think of his death, that he died very dangerously, irksomely, and horribly." Froude's *History of England*, vol. v. p. 155. In other words, he might have repented, and perhaps did so, *between the two strokes*, but as soon as the second had fallen his fate was fixed for ever.

* Dr. Salmon refuses to admit it. See his Appendix to *Two Sermons preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin*, on "The Eternity of Future Punishment," and, "The place which this doctrine ought to hold in Christian Preaching." Note E. His arguments are examined further on.

It was long ago remarked by Dugald Stewart, that "the apparent coldness and selfishness of mankind may be traced, in a great measure, to a want of attention, and a want of imagination."* A very large share of the prevalence of alleged belief in the doctrine just laid down, may, I have no doubt, be ascribed to the same defects. We have, all of us, been familiarized from childhood with such phrases as "eternal punishment of the ungodly," and "everlasting damnation." Even by our police magistrates, who are surely not supposed to be, *ex officio*, critical theologians, the recognized test of the competency of a miserable little child to take an oath, is his reply to the question, "Where shall you go if you tell a lie?" Unless he promptly replies, as, to do him justice, he usually does, "To Hell," his evidence is summarily rejected.

The result of all this familiarity with the words is what might have been anticipated. A very large proportion of Christians make use of the expression 'eternal punishment' and its correlatives, without annexing to the terms any conceptions whatever. On our great church festivals, they thunder forth the Athanasian "damnatory clauses" with cheerful indifference to the sad fate of the doomed ones; a pleasing consciousness of their own piety in repeating, and, *as they think*, believing, the ecclesiastical formulas, being the only mental state developed in them by the process. I do truly believe that if every man, before repeating the Athanasian creed, would sit down quietly, and—say for five minutes—steadily endeavour to realize in his imagination, as far as he is capable of doing it, what the contents of the notion "Eternal

* *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind.* Part I, Chap. vii., sec. 4.

Torment" are, we should find an enormous increase of, so-called, heresy with respect to these portions of the Creed. The response, "Which Faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly," would be nearly confined to the clerk.

Let us endeavour therefore to fix our ideas a little upon this point. I commend to the reader's consideration the following extract from M. Sismondi's *Histoire des Républiques Italiennes du Moyen Age*:

"Les Visconti construisirent à Pavie une forteresse et y placèrent une nombreuse garnison, pour s'assurer à jamais la possession de cette conquête. En même temps ils cherchèrent à épouvanter leurs ennemis par les tourments atroces auxquels ils livrèrent ceux qui tombaient entre leurs mains. Bernabos Visconti, le plus cruel des deux frères, ordonna, par un édit public, à tous les tribunaux, de prolonger durant quarante jours le supplice des criminels d'état. Les tourments ne devaient recommencer que de deux jours l'un, et dans les jours pairs les suppliciés étaient laissés à un affreux repos. Le premier, le troisième, le cinquième et le septième jour ils devaient recevoir cinq tours d'estrapade; deux jours on leur faisait boire de l'eau mêlée de chaux et de vinaigre; deux jours, après leur avoir arraché la peau de la plante des pieds, on les faisait marcher sur des pois chiches; puis on arrachait successivement un œil après l'autre; on coupait le nez, les deux mains, les deux pieds du supplicié; et le quarante-unième jour ce malheureux était tenaillé et finissait ses souffrances sur la roue. Un grand nombre de victimes, en 1362 et 1363, furent soumises à cet épouvantable supplice; et le tyran osa publier son infernale ordonnance, qui aurait

dâ armer contre lui l'Église et l'Empire, et tous les peuples, et ses lâches ministres eux-mêmes."*

With what feelings do we regard Bernabos on reading this description of what was known in Italy, in the fourteenth century, by the name of "Visconti's Lent"? We cannot cast our eyes over the hideous details without a shudder. And yet we are taught to believe, as an essential article of our faith, that the all-merciful God will inflict upon the great mass of His human creation, torments in comparison with which, these, the infernal conceptions of the malignant tyrant of Milan, were mild and gentle punishments; and which, instead of lasting for forty days, shall be only at their commencement, when forty millions of miserable, hopeless years, shall have rolled away.

Are these the good tidings of great joy? Is this the true meaning of the peace on earth, good will toward men, which the multitude of the heavenly host proclaimed? Was it zeal to proclaim this terrible dogma that strengthened those of whom the world was not worthy, to pass through the fiery sea? Ah! can we wonder that, when we teach such a doctrine as this, the infidel makes rapid progress? Do we not ourselves put into his hands the most powerful engine conceivable for extermination of all faith? And, unless the Scriptural evidence,† not for Future Punishment only, but for Everlasting Punishment, be indeed of such a nature that no second opinion on the subject

* Tom. iv., p. 282. I do not cite this ordinance of Bernabos Visconti as by any means the worst specimen of the tyranny of the middle ages. There were many worse than this, but their horrible details are of such a nature that they cannot be reproduced in a modern work.

† The Scriptural evidence is examined in the Fourth and Fifth Chapters.

can be admitted, do we not incur a fearful responsibility in proclaiming "Everlasting Fire" as an article of our creed?

The awful nature of this doctrine is not, however, overlooked by its ablest defenders. The following striking passage from one of Archer Butler's sermons shows how strongly it was felt by him: "Were it possible for man's imagination to conceive the horrors of such a doom as this, all reasoning about it were at an end; it would scorch and wither all the powers of human thought. Human life were at a stand, could these things be really felt as they deserve. Even for him who can humbly trust himself, comparatively secure in faith and obedience, were the thin veil of this poor shadowy life suddenly undrawn, and those immortal agonies, that never-dying death, made known in the way of direct perception,—and those, it may be, that such a one, with the keen sympathies so characteristic of the Christian, loves and values, seen to be at last among the victims of that irreparable doom,—can we doubt that he would come forth with intellect blanched and idealess from a sight too terrible for any whose faculties are not on the scale of eternity itself? It is God's mercy that we can believe what adequately to conceive were death."*

Pressed down by the overwhelming load of this relentless dogma, the inquirer perhaps repairs for advice to his spiritual counsellor. The advice tendered him is substantially as follows: "You tell me that you are sorely troubled in mind in consequence of the Scripture doctrine of the future destiny of the wicked; and that you find yourself unable to attain to that high degree

* *Sermons*, second series, p. 383.

of faith which can believe Him merciful who damns so many, and who saves so few. I warn you to abstain, as much as may be, from speculating on such matters. The doctrine of the Eternity of Future Punishments rests on the unquestionable authority of Holy Scripture; you must therefore receive it, in its full extent, with implicit faith. But such profound mysteries, where 'God has revealed so little, and that little of such awful moment,' must be handled with caution. Put your own trust in Him whose mercy is over all His works, and, avoiding speculation about the fate of others, wait patiently for a resolution of your difficulties in that happy place where we shall know even as we are known."

Such advice is well meant, and may, for a time, be of some benefit to the perplexed and anxious soul. Silenced, if not convinced, the incipient sceptic resolves to follow it, and at first, perhaps, with some success. The love of God to man, His infinite Holiness, the Communion of Saints, the joys of the heavenly kingdom, form the subjects of his religious meditations; his eyes are resolutely turned from the dark side of the picture; the eclipse of faith passes away.

But a railway collision, or a shot in battle, or a spasm of the heart, dashes into eternity, unprepared, one of the small circle of friends as dear to him as his own life, and the advice of the spiritual counsellor turns to ashes in an instant. The image of him who is dead and gone cannot be banished, and the question—"Has he gone to eternal torment?" is to be evaded no more. The advice to abstain from thinking about such questions is now manifested in its true light, as a miserable attempt to evade a difficulty, which cannot be, and ought not to be, evaded. I say that it ought not to be evaded,

for I must emphatically protest against the mode in which many of our theologians shuffle it on one side, as if it were a comparative trifle—an apparent mote or speck in the great Christian scheme.* If the doctrine be indeed true, in the sense in which it is commonly taught by Protestant divines, it is unquestionably the grand characteristic of that system; and must be minutely scrutinized in all its bearings.

To the examination of this great fundamental doctrine I now proceed; I shall commence by assuming it to be strictly and literally true, and, arguing from this assumption, trace it forward to some of its inevitable results. By adopting this method, we shall, at all events, have the advantage of knowing what that is, to which we stand committed, if, on examining the Scriptural evidence, we find ourselves ultimately constrained to admit the dogma as an article of our faith; we shall then admit it with our eyes open, which is a great deal more than can be said for most of those who now profess to believe it.

* For example, they tell us sometimes in reference to this doctrine that "we are not to expect that God's dealings with man should be *exactly* what we should wish them to be." The proposition is of course perfectly true, but, I respectfully submit, that it is hardly right to describe a providential dispensation which consigns the greater part of our species to eternal agony, as only being "not *exactly* what we could wish."

CHAPTER II.

ON SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE DOCTRINE OF
ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”* This was the conception of the work of the Evangelist in the minds of the prophet Isaiah, and of the apostle Paul. We are truly taught to believe that the Christian Missionary brings good tidings, that he publishes salvation, on earth peace, and to men good will. But what does he really do? we must consider this with reference to the favorite doctrine of Eternal Punishment.†

There are not a great many at the present day who hold that all the heathen world are to be damned

* Isaiah lii. 7. Rom. x. 15.

† The favorite doctrine, *i.e.* in the clerical profession. I say so advisedly, assuming that a man's attachment to any particular doctrine may be roughly measured by the amount of indignation which is elicited from him by its denial. Religious controversy is proverbial for calling forth, in an aggravated form, all the acerbity of human nature; and yet I have occasionally heard discussions on the doctrine of the Atonement, the Ascension, and other essentials of Christianity, conducted with tolerably good temper on both sides. But I have scarcely ever seen a clergyman who could hear Eternal Punishment doubted, without getting into a passion, and complimenting his opponent as an Infidel and an Atheist.

to eternal torment for not having laid hold upon that salvation of Christ, which was never offered to them here; "How shall they hear without a preacher?"* asks St. Paul. Their future destiny is, doubtless, wrapped in mystery, and, though we may not venture to pronounce, that admission to the kingdom of God will be afforded them, we do not feel ourselves constrained to consign them all, without hope, to the kingdom of the Devil. But the case of a heathen, to whom the Gospel has been once preached, and who has nevertheless rejected it, is wholly different. Salvation has been offered to him, but he has spurned the Saviour. No obscurity rests any longer upon his doom. The worm that dieth not, the fire that never shall be quenched, are his portion for ever. The Gospel has been to him, not "a savour of death unto death"—for death, and even eternal death, destruction from the land of the living, might, for all we know, have fallen on him had he been left alone—but it has been a savour of life unto everlasting agony.

Now what are the practical results of our missions to the heathen? Is not the testimony of all unbiassed witnesses, who have travelled among them, uniform? Success is infinitesimal, failure all but universal. What impression has been made by our associations on the hundred and fifty millions of India? Taking the estimates of the missionaries themselves, who are, not unnaturally, disposed to magnify the good results of their work, the nominal converts are barely one in two thousand, while the number of *bonâ fide* native Christians, "possessed of saving faith," may be regarded as practically evanescent.

* Rom. x. 14.

Remembering, then, these facts, and assuming, as a not improbable proportion, that a zealous missionary preaches the Gospel to a thousand who reject it, for one whom he converts to Christ—God help him—the load of human misery which that man has brought about, must surely weigh heavy on his soul. If any who read these pages have the notion of adopting the calling of a missionary to the heathen world, I commend this result especially to their consideration. Recollect that, if all the torments, mental and bodily, under which the whole creation has groaned and travailed in pain together from the beginning until now, were condensed into one frightful mass, the mass would be a speck, an indivisible atom, when compared with the sufferings of one single immortal soul protracted through eternity. Has any tyrant, a recognized scourge of the human race, brought down such storms of misery on his species as must then be ascribed to the active missionary who has failed? And they have all failed—failed a thousand times over for once they have been successful. What pains have Philip II. of Spain, and the grand inquisitor Torquemada, and Bernabos Visconti, inflicted on mankind in comparison with those brought about by these preachers of the Gospel?

Think, O missionary of Christ, of the Judgment-Day. Standing in the small band of God's elect, on the right hand of the Throne, you look across the abyss to the lost multitude who tremble on the shore of their eternal dwelling-place, the burning lake; among them stand the thousand to whom you preached, but preached in vain, and a thousand outstretched hands point out *you* as their destroyer—a thousand tongues, parched in the everlasting flame, charge *you* with their appalling doom—"If you had not come to us with

your gospel we should not have been here—In the smoke of our torment ascending up for ever and ever, behold your work!”

Perhaps one or two, your joy and crown, may stand beside you. Your preaching may have saved them from annihilation, but has not their salvation been bought too dearly, with the everlasting misery of so many? Would you not wish that some other profession had been yours? Would it not have been better if you had worn out your life in the lonely cell of a monastery—in the desert with the wild beasts—on the top of a pillar like St. Simeon Stylites—so that you had not been stained with the everlasting ruin of so many immortal souls? Surely this is a prospect that must invigorate the frame, and give eloquence to the tongue of the missionary. His words may *possibly* bring life, but *most probably* they will produce no effect; and, if they fail, they seal the everlasting ruin of all who hear them.

But as for the rest of the company on the right hand of the Throne—even those who cannot, like the missionary, charge themselves with having been, innocently but actively, instrumental in fixing the doom of any of the wicked—can we believe that in them all human sympathies have been exterminated, so that, with bliss unalloyed, they can behold that dreadful scene? Can we even imagine them contemplating it without absolute dismay? I dismiss, with disgust, all such questions as, “*Utrum beati lætentur de poenis impiorum?*” which may in other words be expressed “Are the Blessed turned into Devils?” The elect of whom I speak are not those, generally repulsive, individuals who, in this earthly life, have the effrontery to style themselves as such. I speak of those who are

in truth the elect of God—the salt of the earth—but known to Himself only.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that He that sitteth on the Throne were to say, as He once said long ago, "It repenteth me that I have made man." What if He were to turn to the elect and grant to them to choose between two things—to decide whether the judgment should proceed, and the bottomless pit close its fiery jaws on the victims destined to live in it for ever in hopeless pain—or, as the alternative, that the unveiled terrors of that Face, which no man can see and live, should, in an instant, scorch and wither into nonentity all that had ever lived and moved upon this earth. Can we doubt for a moment what would be the answer? I, for one, doubt it not. With one loud voice the whole company proclaims—"We resign our immortal life, only let that great sea of misery be dried up too!"

I cannot bring myself to believe that the absolute annihilation of the human race at the day of judgment, would be preferable to that destiny which the Christian religion teaches; but I do not see how any believer in Eternal Punishment, who retains that love for his brother which Paul, and John, and the Saviour Himself insisted upon so strongly, can avoid the consequence.

I used often to think that some of the most affecting works in existence were those old treatises of the Greek and Roman philosophers, in which, groping through thick darkness, they made a struggle for the immortality of the soul. With what acuteness they stated all the physical arguments, and how unsatisfactory was their conclusion! "Maximum argu-

mentum est," says Cicero, "naturam ipsam de immortalitate animorum tacitam judicare, quod omnibus curæ sunt, et maxime quidem, quæ post mortem futura sint."* How this man would have rejoiced if the gospel, bringing life and immortality to light, had been brought to him. And yet would the gospel, with its fearful adjunct of conventional interpretation, have really improved his condition? I quote a few lines of the dialogue:—

Marcus. "Quid hoc? dasne aut manere animos post mortem, aut morte ipsa interire?"

Auditor. "Do vero."

Marcus. "Quid, si maneant?"

Auditor. "*Beatos esse concedo.*"

Marcus. "Si intereant?"

Auditor. "Non esse miseros, quoniam ne sint quidem. Jam istuc, coacti a te, paulo ante concessimus."

Marcus. "Quo modo igitur aut cur mortem malum tibi videri dicis, quæ aut beatos nos efficiet, animis manentibus, aut non miseros, sensu carentes?"†

I cannot think that these two men would have considered this their creed improved, by learning the tremendous sentence of eternal fire launched forth against most of their species. Cicero could no longer say of death, "nunc video calcem, ad quam cum sit decursum, nihil sit præterea extimescendum."‡

But the question may be brought to a more practical issue by considering it from another point of view.

* *Quest. Tusc. Lib. I. c. 14.*

† *Lib. I. c. 11.* and to the same effect,—"*Si supremus ille dies non extinctionem, sed commutationem affert loci, quid optabilius? sin autem perimit ac delet omnino, quid melius quam in mediis vitæ laboribus obdormiscere, et ita conniventem somno consopiri sempiterno?*" *c. 49.*

‡ *c. 8.*

It may be said that we do not intend to adopt the missionaries' life; the gospel moreover, was brought into the world ages before we were born, and whether it was preached to Cicero or not, can in no way concern us. True: but we *can* help increasing the mass doomed to perdition. Doubtless the social nature of man leads to the contraction of family ties, but it cannot be said that any one is *compelled* thereto.* I am inclined to think that a little reflection on the overwhelming responsibility incurred, in taking any such step, by the believer in eternal fire, as the destiny of the mass of mankind, would go far to decide the question as to the truth of his doctrine.

The chances are that most of your children who survive the period of infancy will be damned to all eternity. It has not, I believe, been definitely settled by orthodox divines, at what precise period of its life, a child becomes capable of incurring such a sentence. Some Calvinists exempt none. Their hell is "paved with the skulls of infants a span long," for which "fact" they are peculiarly loud in their praises to their God. I have already said, however, that I do not consider their theory. But it is quite clear that very young children indeed are capable of doing what they know to be wrong; and should they happen to be cut off in such an act of sin, orthodoxy knows but one sentence. Take any of the popular evangelical literature for children, which issues in torrents from the press, you will find that it abounds in threats of eternal fire. "I was very naughty yesterday, and cried about taking my medicine, and, only that Jesus Christ died for my sin, I

* To assert the constraint of religious motives, is, in the face of such texts as 1 Cor. vii., 26, 38, 40, simple dishonesty.

must have gone to live with the Devil for ever in flames of fire. How thankful should I be to God for not cutting me off in my sin."—What can be more wretched than to find such words put into the mouth of a little sick child, four or five years old, lying on his death-bed? What an idea he must have of the Heavenly Father to whom he is going. There must, in truth, be divine vitality in the Christian faith, when, in the face of such a creed as this, it has been able to survive.

But, admitting the salvation of the little child, the chances still are that, of your children who grow up to be men or women, the most will perish for ever. For, what right have you to consider yourself a special favorite of the Almighty, and your offspring exceptions to the common lot of humanity. You may say, "I do not believe in their perdition, for I intend to bring up my family in the fear of God; they shall have the best religious training and discipline." I grant it, you will, doubtless, do your best for them. But do we find it a matter of fact that those children who have been well trained; who have had pious parents; who have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as a general rule turn out well? So far from it, is it not one of the tritest remarks that the reverse is frequently the case? And, if so, why are you to be an exception? Let us, however, concede even this point; you cannot yet deny that there is at least a *chance* that some of your children, or *one* of them, may be a dweller with everlasting burnings. Spend now the suggested five minutes,* in endeavouring to realize what that means; and say, at the end of it,

* See p. 7.

can you look that contingency—if it be but a contingency—in the face? Can you justify yourself in bringing into the world immortal beings *with the bare chance of such a hideous doom?* Are you prepared to incur this risk, because you consider that you yourself will be more comfortable when settled down as a family man? Few, I trust, could be found, so utterly absorbed in selfishness, as to take the chance, if they really reflected on the inevitable consequences of that terrible doctrine to which they stand committed.

Indeed this doctrine of Eternal Torments, when translated into the family life, and steadily traced to its results, leads to the most startling conclusions; and, for this reason, its consideration, *from this point of view*, is systematically ignored by almost all orthodox divines. How often the sick infant, rescued from the grasp of death, by the incessant watchfulness and care of his pious mother, turns out badly in after life, and is cut off in unrepented sin. On the other hand, the dying child of the drunken profligate, who perishes through neglect, is taken up by the angels into the heavenly kingdom. What an infinite curse was the good mother, what an infinite blessing was the bad one, to their respective offspring! What infinite blessings were the ruffianly Spanish soldiery to the Indian children, when they had them baptized, and then cut their throats!

And yet, if we choose to stand by this doctrine, we must be prepared to accept those consequences which necessarily flow from it. But, to these, men resolutely shut their eyes. From the family circle it is uniformly excluded. The dwellers within that sacred inclosure have always, in some mysterious way,

a charmed life, which can never issue in eternal woe. And, even with respect to our mere acquaintances, the conventional forms of speech, as used by persons of the soundest and most unquestionable orthodoxy, show clearly that, in their case also, our creed is but theoretical. One of them dies after a painful illness. We have not the slightest reason for supposing that he was possessed of saving faith; that he was "in Jesus." From anything we ever knew of him we have perhaps strong reasons for supposing he was not. But the uniform remark on hearing of his death is "What a merciful release!"—In flat contradiction with our creed, we assume that his earthly sufferings having ceased, all pain is over now *for him*.

But the terrible difficulty arising from the relations of the saved to the lost, cannot even be mitigated. I pass by the common solution with a very few remarks. It is said that, in the case of the redeemed, resignation to the will of God must absorb every other feeling; and that, therefore, they can feel no grief for the unending torments of their former friend. But intense resignation to the Divine Will, *with respect to the sufferings of our neighbours*, is, to my mind, a very questionable indication of the grace of God. It may be accounted for by a wholly different principle; and, in fact, its value may be submitted to a very simple test. You need only suppose that, instead of your neighbour, it is yourself, for whom the Divine Will has decreed the fiery pit for ever. How far would your "resignation and conformity" to that Will, carry you? A very short way, I believe; and yet the Bible tells you that you should love your neighbour *as yourself*.

I proceed to the consideration of Dr. Salmon's

solution of the difficulty. He remarks, in the first place, that "the difficulty remains if there be *any* wicked who are not finally restored, unless we suppose that these never had any to love them." Without, however, asserting the ultimate *restoration* of all the wicked, for which I can see small ground, I can hardly believe that Dr. Salmon would not admit that the difficulty would be immensely mitigated by the hypothesis of their annihilation. Few, surely, will dispute, that it is one thing to believe that a friend whom we have dearly loved on earth, and who has loved us as well, has ceased for ever to exist—and another thing to believe that he is living in hopeless agony for ever. In the one case I can admit, with little qualification, Dr. Salmon's solution, which is as follows :

"The purest earthly love may be worn out at length by the heartless ingratitude of its object. Wives have borne long with injuries from their husbands, sisters from their brothers, and have been wearied out at length, especially when they have been forced to see with indignation, the wife her children, or the sister her parents, suffering from the same ill-treatment as herself. Now, none can perish eternally who have not wearied out Love surpassing the fondest earthly love. If the patience and long-suffering of the All-Merciful has its limits, we may well believe that long before these limits have been reached, the love will have been exhausted of those who will more keenly feel the heinousness of sin than any can know it now, and who cannot but be indignant at insults offered to Him whom they will have learned to love best of all."*

* *Sermons* before quoted, Note D, p. 44.

Perhaps this is too strongly stated, nevertheless we can understand how Time may annul our grief, and produce complete resignation to that Almighty Will which has struck our former friend from the land of the living. Above all, no question can arise as to the justice of His decree, for He who granted life, may, of course, at His own good pleasure, revoke His gift. But, in the second case, I am confident that no lapse of time could remove or diminish my sorrow. I will go further: I firmly believe that if, in the fruition of the Heavenly Kingdom, a time should come when I shall be capable of forgetting that one who truly loved me in this world, and yet failed to perceive that Love of God which passeth knowledge, is alive in hopeless torment—scorched by the everlasting flame—gnawed by the undying worm—I must have sunk down lower in the moral scale before this came to pass. I must have become more deeply immersed in heartless selfishness than I am now. And this, which I believe of myself, I believe of everyone else. There is only one explanation of this frightful difficulty. We must assume that the redeemed are morally worse in heaven than they were on earth.*

It is strange indeed how great is the effect of an extended study of Theology in hardening the human heart. Of this unfortunate fact we shall see some

* The late Archbishop Whately's notion that the blest in the world to come will possess the power of drawing off their thoughts at pleasure from painful subjects, and will occupy their minds entirely with the thought of things agreeable, and in which their exertions can be of service, affords some help to those who hold the doctrine of eternal death; but to the believers in eternal torments the exercise of any such faculty could, only on principles of the coarsest and most brutal selfishness, afford a moment's relief.—See his *View of the Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State*, p. 301.

terrible instances when we come to consider the arguments by which divines attempt, on moral grounds, to justify the eternity of future punishment. They there lay down, as moral axioms, propositions which, I am confident, no other class of men would dare to assert. That such an effect should be produced by their studies, on theologians of the church of Rome,—where an unnatural system obliterates all human affection in the spiritual man,—is no cause for wonder. But it *is* wonderful, and yet true, that very nearly the same effect is produced by the same process on Protestant divines.* Perhaps they have allowed the first great commandment of the law to overshadow everything else, and yet have we not the highest authority for maintaining that the second—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself—is LIKE UNTO IT? No doubt, we do not love our neighbours as ourselves; and any, even rude, approximation to such love is, in each of us, confined to a very small circle. Yet we can all appreciate the essential morality of the command. Bishop Butler has clearly shown that, considered as a question of practical ethics, there are no difficulties in the way of accepting the precept in the literal, grammatical meaning of the words;† and we can easily conceive that the higher we rise in the scale of moral being, the more closely we shall attain to conformity with this law. True, each upward step will intensify our conviction of the malignity of sin—will increase *our own* abhorrence of it, but *not* to the

* Mr. Froude, in his estimate of the character of Cardinal Pole, has remarked, with great truth, that “theological theories stand especially in need to be corrected by the human instincts and the genial emotions.”—*History of England*, Vol. vi. p. 531.

† Sermon xii.

extinction, or diminution of our love for those who are less enlightened in conscience than ourselves.*

As a conclusion to this part of the discussion, I recommend the following scene, depicted by Mr. Theodore Parker, to the consideration of the reader :

“The Atheist sits down beside the coffin of his only child—a rose-bud daughter whose heart death slowly ate away; the pale lilies of the valley which droop with fragrance above that lifeless heart are flowers of mockery to him; their beauty is a cheat. They give not back his child for whom the sepulchral monster opens its remorseless jaws. The hopeless father looks down on the face of his girl, silent, not sleeping, cold, dead. The ‘effacing fingers’ have put out the eye, yet marble beauty still lingers there, and love, a father’s love, continually haunts the disenchanting house. Atheism cannot speed it away; affection has its law, which no impiety of thought annuls. He looks beyond, it is only solid darkness he looks on. No rainbow beautifies that cloud; there is thunder in it, not light. Night is behind—without a star. His dear one has vanished, her light put out by thunderous death, not a sparklet left. ‘I also shall soon vanish,’ exclaims the man, ‘blotted out by darkness, and be nothing—my bubble broke, my life all gone, with its bitter tears for the child and the mother who bore her, its bridal and birth-day joys,

* See Butler’s proof that the highest degree of injury to ourselves cannot innocently destroy benevolence. “It is not man’s being a social creature, much less his being a moral agent, from whence *alone* our obligations to good-will towards him arise. There is an obligation to it prior to either of these, arising from his being a *sensible* (sentient) creature; that is, capable of happiness or misery. Now this obligation cannot be superseded by his moral character.”—*Sermon ix.*

which glittered a moment—how bright they were, then slipped away,—my sorrows all unrequited, my hopes a cruel cheat. Ah me! the stars slowly gathering into one flock, are a sorry sight—each a sphere tenanted perhaps by the same bubbles, the same cheats, the same despair—for it is a here with no Hereafter, a body with no Soul, a world without a God!

“Hard by in the same village, the self-same night, a thoughtful man, born, baptized, and bred a theological Christian, full of faith in the popular mythology of the Churches, accepting its grimmest ghastliness, sits down by the bedside of his prodigal son, his only child,—life’s substance squandered on harlots, wasted in riotous living. Death knocks at the profligate’s oft-battered door: no syren shakes the wanton windows now. The last hour of the impenitent has come. The father looks on that face so like its mortal mother once, now stained by riot, the mother’s image broken and crushed. He feels the breath of the sepulchral monster as it slowly numbs the youthful limbs; he sees the mist cloud over the inanimate and soulless eye. Life slowly ripples out from that once manly heart. Telescopic memory sweeps the horizon of the father’s consciousness. He remembers the cradle,—bought with such triumph,—the birth-night, the little garments previously made ready for the expected guest; the prayer of gratitude for the given and the spared when first he saw his first-born son; he recalls the day of his marriage, when he stood on the world’s top, and Heaven gave him that angel—it seemed so then—to be loved, a real angel now, long since gone home to Heaven, her heart broken by the son’s precocious waywardness. The father watches the ebb

of mortal life, it is the flood of hell, bitter, remorseless, endless hell; his son sinks into damnation—joint by joint, and limb by limb. Now he has sunk all over! The mortal father turns to religion for comfort. Theology tells him of the fire that is never quenched, of the worm which dieth not, the torments of his child—the smoke ascending up for ever and ever. His Bible becomes a torment; in the many mansions of its heaven he knows none for the impenitent prodigal whom Death drives from husks and swine. He looks up after God; a grisly king makes the earth tremble at his frown—angry with the wicked every day, and keeping anger for ever; there is no Father. He turns to the Man of Sorrows,—but the Crucified thunders ‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels’; and all the host of theological Christians respond—‘He shall go into everlasting punishment! Amen!’ For him there is no Christ, and never shall be one. Religion is a torment, immortality a curse. ‘Is there no mother for my son?’ he cries. The finger of Theology, hiding the morning star, points down to hell, and the voice of Night with cold breath whispers ‘For ever.’

“At the grave the Atheist and the theological Christian look each other in the face; 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!”*

I ask now which of these two miserable men had the greatest cause for sorrow—and the two scenes are by no means far-fetched or improbable. There can be but one answer—the gloomy, starless prospect

* *The Function and Influence of the idea of Immortal Life*, p. 165.

of the Atheist was nevertheless more cheering than that which lay before him who, though an orthodox believer in Christ, retained the dogma of Eternal Torments. An awful and horrible conclusion,—but one which all who believe that doctrine must be prepared to admit and approve.

Having now traced the doctrine of Eternal Punishment to a few of its results, I next proceed to examine it, considered as a question of Ethical Science.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT CONSIDERED
IN RELATION TO ETHICAL SCIENCE.

THE question whether all morality is, or is not, resolvable into conformity with the Divine Will, has been pertinaciously discussed by writers on Moral Philosophy. In other words,—Does an act become “right” solely in consequence of the command of God, or, on the other hand, are there certain antecedent relations, or “eternal differences,” in things themselves, in consequence of which, certain acts are pronounced “right,” others “wrong,” according as they agree or disagree with these eternal differences? But the profound speculations of these writers have, as far as this question is concerned, led to no result whatever. Here, as in all cases where the problem trenches upon the misty domain of metaphysics, the *materials* for its solution are wanting, and no intellectual web-spinning can supply their place.

But, fortunately for our present purpose, we need not seek to unravel the enigma. Our task is much simpler; we have only to decide a question of facts. Is it a fact that our Creator has formed us in such a manner that we are capable of pronouncing certain acts to be right, and others to be wrong, without considering whether they have been commanded by Him or not? To answer this question affirmatively or negatively, we need only appeal to consciousness;

and consciousness at once determines *that we have been so formed*; and, further, it tells us that we have been furnished with a rule or standard of right and wrong, of such extraordinary nature, that we are capable of comparing with it, an act, or alleged act, of the Almighty Himself, and thus, as it were, passing judgment upon our Maker.

Let us take an example: Suppose any one asserts as a fact that "God has created an infant for the purpose of manifesting His power and glory by consigning it, after an hour's existence in this world, to unending torture."—Conscience at once replies "It is a wicked act; Omnipotence does not justify it."—There is no hesitation about the decision. The moral faculty spontaneously passes judgment on an act ascribed, by hideous blasphemy, to the Creator. The delivery of the judgment, and, therefore, the existence of the faculty which judged, are simple matters of fact.

Now we must be careful not to forget by Whom this faculty was implanted within us; for this will greatly facilitate our decision as to whether an alleged act of God is rightly ascribed to Him or not.—For, if conscience unequivocally condemns such an alleged act, the question to be decided is no longer the impracticable—"Is abstract morality dependent or not on the Divine Will?" but, "Is it probable that our Creator has implanted in us a faculty by the unavoidable exercise of which we condemn His own acts?"* This latter

* That the moral faculty is capable of pronouncing upon the acts of God, is plainly the doctrine of the Bible. "That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—Gen. xviii. 25. "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour

question admits, I think, of but one answer. We may, therefore, hold that an act, alleged to proceed from God, must be considered as erroneously referred to its author, if it be clearly and unambiguously rejected by the Moral Faculty.*

But at this stage of the investigation we are met by two difficulties. It is alleged, in the first place, that this moral faculty, or conscience, having shared the general corruption of man's nature in the Fall, cannot any longer be relied on as a guide in morals; and, in the second, that our judgments, on moral subjects, are by no means fixed, as in mathematics; but that what is "right" to one individual, or nation, or period, is "wrong" to another individual, or nation, or period, and *vice versâ*.

As for the former difficulty, it need not delay us long. We have the unambiguous authority of the New Testament, as well as the evidence of our own consciousness, for maintaining that obscuration of the

of love."—Heb. vi. 10. In this latter passage the inspired writer has gone much further than we should have ventured without such authority.—See also Rom. iii. 26.

* "Reason," says Butler, "is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning anything, even revelation itself." And he is careful not to be misunderstood to assert "that a supposed revelation cannot be proved false, from internal characters. For, it may contain clear immoralities or contradictions; and either of these would prove it false."—*Analogy*, Part ii. chap. 3. A few pages further on, in the same chapter, he explains more fully what he means by this function of reason in passing judgment upon the morality of Scripture—"not whether it contains things different from what we should have expected from a wise, just, and good Being; but whether it contains things plainly contradictory to wisdom, justice, or goodness; to what the light of nature teaches us of God." Now, what things are "plainly contradictory to wisdom, justice, and goodness," must be determined by the moral faculty of each individual—the faculty of highest order with which human beings have been endowed, notwithstanding any theories of Mr. Buckle.

moral faculty was not, or, at least, was to a very inconsiderable extent, the result of the Fall of Man. Such obliteration of the moral faculty would have been, indeed, a very singular result of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Depravation of the will, not confusion of the moral judgment, was plainly the specific deterioration. We see well enough in most cases what we ought to do, though unhappily we often fail to do it. No writer could lay down this doctrine more explicitly than St. Paul. I need only refer to one well-known passage—"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing, one another."*—What position these Gentiles, who were thus a law unto themselves, occupied in the scale of morality, we learn from the latter part of the first chapter. They were sunk in sins of such deep dye that they cannot now be named—in sins "from which the depraved nature of man, ever prone to sin, shrinks back with horror"—And yet *even these* were a law unto themselves; the voice of conscience was not silent in their breasts.

As for the second difficulty—the diversity of men's moral judgments—it is not to be, so easily, got rid of. That this diversity is often greatly exaggerated, has been clearly shown by many writers on Ethical Philosophy.† Still, it is a fact that men do not *always* agree in their moral estimates of particular acts; and—

* Rom. ii, 14, 15.

† See, for example, Dugald Stewart's *Philosophy of the Active and Moral Powers*. · Book ii., chapters 3 and 4.

the ultimate appeal being to the sentiment of right and wrong—if one man assert that his conscience tells him a certain act is *right*, while another, with equal knowledge of the circumstances, asserts that *his* conscience pronounces it *wrong*, it would appear that the discussion must terminate. In such cases I believe that the only method by which we can arrive at a decision is the old induction *per enumerationem simplicem*. The human moral faculty is, as a general rule, sound and healthy; and, if we find a moral proposition deliberately affirmed as right, by nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand of our civilized fellow-men, we may feel tolerably confident that the decision is correct. Whether the assertors *act* in conformity with their decision or not, does not in the least affect the question. Such an appeal will be sufficient to eliminate the *idola specus*—the peculiarities of the individual—from the general moral determinations of humanity.

Still I am very far from supposing that an appeal to the verdict of our fellow-men will, in all cases, lead us to a definite result; and, for this reason, I am not disposed to lay any great stress upon the proposition that the Eternity of Future Punishment is condemned by the moral faculty. The assertion that endless torments will be inflicted upon a creature, by the Being of Infinite Love and Justice who made him, involves, to my mind, a contradiction in terms. It contradicts my notion of Love,* and I can no more admit the Love of God to cease, than I can admit His

* I am quite willing to admit the above proposition to be consistent with the attribute of the Divine Love, provided we agree to define that "Love" as something exactly the reverse of the human affection so named.

Life, or His Intelligence to cease. I believe, further, that most men, who have bestowed sufficient reflection upon the meaning of the proposition, hold the same view. But *some* will assuredly be found who do not perceive the contradiction; and, I fear, many more who will *assert* that they do not see it; it will, therefore, be necessary to examine, at some length, the arguments by which the defenders of Eternal Punishment attempt to justify its infliction. I think that in the course of this examination, the essential contradiction which exists between the two conceptions, "The Infinite Torment of a Creature," and, "The Infinite Love of God," will be brought into still clearer light.

This investigation is the more necessary, inasmuch as many of the apologists appear to consider that the contradiction,—which they must surely admit to be, at least, *apparent*,—is sufficiently met by a simple notice that the great problem, What is the origin of Evil? is, on all hands, admitted to be absolutely insoluble.* It is not, I think, difficult to point out the error into which the apologists aforesaid have here fallen.

It is perfectly true that the general question as to the origin of evil, has been long since rightly abandoned as insoluble by almost all schools of

* For instance, with respect to the argument of some who reject Eternal Punishment on the grounds that it cannot be that evil shall continue for ever, but that some time or other there shall be a complete victory of good, whereby sin and suffering shall be finally expelled from the universe, Dr. Salmon remarks as follows: "Alas! the existence of evil is the very subject on which our wishes, or our theoretical speculations, as to what ought to be, can least be trusted to inform us correctly what does take place. That a God of infinite love and power should permit evil to exist now, is a thing of which nothing but positive experience could convince us."—*Sermon on the Eternity of Future Punishment*, p. 15.

philosophers.* But the particular point at which the existence of evil changes from the *inexplicable fact*, to the *contradiction of a Divine Attribute*, is, with equal invariability, overlooked:—"The real riddle of existence,"—says Mr. Mansel, "the problem which confounds all philosophy,—aye, and all religion too, so far as religion is a thing of man's reason,—is the fact that evil exists *at all*; not that it exists for a longer or a shorter duration. Is not God infinitely wise and holy and powerful *now*? and does not sin exist along with that infinite holiness and wisdom and power? Is God to become more holy, more wise, more powerful hereafter; and must evil be annihilated to make room for His perfections to expand? Does the infinity of His eternal nature ebb and flow with every increase or diminution in the sum of human guilt and misery? Against this immovable barrier of the existence of evil, the waves of philosophy have dashed themselves unceasingly since the birth-day of human thought, and have retired broken and powerless, without displacing the minutest fragment of the stubborn rock, without softening one feature of its dark and rugged surface."†

To this statement I make no substantial objection; for, I presume, Mr. Mansel does not mean to deny

* As a fair sample of the gross absurdities in which the human mind involves itself, in speculating on this mystery, I may refer to Archbishop King's treatise *De Origine Mali*,—*passim*. To the common dilemma, that the existence of evil proves God to be either malevolent or weak, as being either unwilling or unable to prevent it, the archbishop intrepidly replies—"nec vult nec potest."

† *Bampton Lectures*. Lect. vii., p. 222. And, similarly,—“That this ‘moral evil’ should have existed at all, much more to so immense an extent, under the administration of *supposed* infinite power, wisdom, and benevolence, is the great difficulty.”—*Eclipse of Faith*, p. 137.

that the difficulty is much *increased* by the supposition that evil is infinite. The existence of evil is *inexplicable*, but it is not *contradictory* to the Divine Attribute of Love. And I can go further: I can admit, in one way, the Infinity of Evil and yet retain my confidence in that Love. For my own part, I do indeed *hope* that a time will come when all evil shall have ceased throughout the entire field of God's Creation; when "all but the incorrigibly bad" shall have been restored to goodness, and the excepted ones shall have ceased to live. But I could not venture to *teach* that evil will ever cease to exist; the lamp of God, the moral sense, has not decided the question for me. I can admit even everlasting evil, and yet hold fast my trust in the justice and mercy and love of Almighty God.

But, at the next step, the moral sense passes judgment and forbids me to go further. It forbids me to admit as possible the Infinite duration of evil *in one and the same created sentient subject*. Here we have reached the point at which the existence of evil changes its aspect from the insoluble mystery to the contradiction of an attribute of God.* I can admit the existence of evil; I can admit its eternal existence; but, if I felt myself constrained to admit its eternal

* The uniformity with which the defenders of eternal punishment ignore this obvious distinction is absolutely marvellous. Archer Butler argues as follows:—"If it be urged—wildly urged—that the sufferer might be annihilated, and so the miserable bond of wickedness and woe dissolved for ever: we reply, so too he *might* never have existed; at any moment you select in the countless ages to come, how should that wretched spirit cease to exist on any ground which will not be as applicable to any *other* period, or which will not equally shew he ought never to have existed at all?"—In this 'reply' the ideas of finite and infinite are assumed to have no difference. Infinite torment of the sinner *contradicts* the Divine Morality. His creation is only an *inexplicable* fact.

existence in one and the same living creature, I should at once sink down helplessly into the deadliest of heresies,—the heresy of heresies—in comparison with which the wildest dreams of the Gnostic or Manichæan were harmless reveries—I mean the heresy of doubting the justice and goodness of my Creator.*

For, I am absolutely unable to justify the infliction of so terrific a sentence as unending sin and misery upon a finite being, created by God's hand. Reflecting again, that the suffering of a single immortal spirit would reduce, by comparison, to an imperceptible speck, the whole prodigious load of misery under which the whole creation has groaned from the beginning, I cannot conceive any finite sin *deserving* such a doom.† I cannot conceive it proceeding from

* Mr. Maurice, in the preface to the second edition of his *Theological Essays*, remarks: "I admire unspeakably those who can believe in the Love of God, and can love their brethren, in spite of the opinion which they seem to cherish, that He has doomed them to destruction. I am sure that their faith is as much purer and stronger than mine, as it is than their own system."—p. xxvi. If by "destruction" we are here to understand "everlasting torments," I, for my part, estimate their alleged love of their brethren at a very small amount.

† It is a common Protestant dogma that any single unrepented sin, however trivial in our eyes, *deserves* eternal torture. You fall asleep for a minute or two in church, at afternoon service, on a hot day: of course you should have been attending to the service; but, honestly and truly, do you clearly see and feel that those two minutes' sleep *deserves, at the hand of Infinite Justice*, everlasting agony? And, if you do not see it, why should you profess to do so? "The Catholic Church holds it better for the sun and moon to drop from heaven, for the earth to fail, and for all the many millions on it to die of starvation in extremest agony, as far as temporal affliction goes, than that one soul, I will not say, should be lost, but should commit one single venial sin, should tell one wilful untruth, or should steal one poor farthing without excuse."—Newman (John Henry), *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. p. 384. This language is sufficiently strong, but, in comparison with the above dogma, it is mild and reasonable.

a *merciful* Being. The sentence appears to be clearly repugnant not only to mercy but to justice. It surely requires some explanation. The *onus probandi* rests upon its supporters; let us see what they have to allege on its behalf.

The first explanatory theory which I shall notice is a very ancient one; and indeed, only for its reproduction in Dr. Salmon's sermon, before referred to, I should have passed it by. Though not laying any stress upon it, he evidently regards it with some complacency. It is as follows: "Sin being an offence against an Infinite Being, cannot be atoned for by any finite sufferings; and therefore, the least sin of man requires as its atonement either the eternal punishment of the offender, or the suffering of one who is infinite." As for this argument, if indeed it deserve the name of argument, the old retort is far more than sufficient as a reply: "Sin being *committed by* a finite creature, requires only the finite punishment of the offender, or a finite satisfaction." The retort, I say, is more than sufficient, inasmuch as the intensity of an offence is always in proportion to the moral and intellectual capacities of *the offender*, and not to the dignity of him against whom it has been committed. This latter element comes into consideration, in aggravation of the fault, only so far as that dignity was known *to the offender at the time* when that fault was committed. And, as the Infinite Nature of God does not, and cannot, come under the cognition of the sinner, no transcendental penal results can be justified therefrom.

The theory, as stated above, is so palpably worthless that its refutation is unnecessary; it may, however, be presented in a much more plausible form.

Admitting the Divinity of the Saviour, it is urged that Sin *did* require an Infinite Atonement; and, therefore, must involve some inconceivable malignity, in consequence of which the infliction of Eternal Punishment is a justifiable act, in all cases which that Infinite Atonement does not cover. I invite attention to this form of the argument, for I believe a serious and dangerous error is here involved. The reasoning is stated as follows by Archbishop Magee :

“The Scriptures proclaim the divinity of Christ; and so far are we from inferring this attribute of our Lord from the necessity of an infinite satisfaction, that we infer *from it*, both the great love of our Almighty Father, who has spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; and the *great heinousness of human guilt, for the expiation of which, it was deemed fit that so great a Being should suffer.*”*

It is the last clause of this argument, (that in Italics) to which I object, as containing a serious logical error. The great love of the Father to the human race, as instanced in the sacrifice of Christ, is, over and over again, asserted in the New Testament; and the assertion is in perfect harmony with the dictates of our moral nature. But the inference as to “the great heinousness of human guilt” from the tremendous sacrifice required to expiate it, is simply an excursion of the human

* Dissertations on the Atonement, No. xiii. To the same effect Archer Butler: “The Eternity of punishment is but the counterpart of that other mystery of the unspeakable malignity of sin, which itself is demonstrated by that third tremendous mystery of the Divine Atonement it required.”—*Sermons, Doctrinal and Practical*. 2d Series, p. 384. This proof of one mystery by another mystery, which again is proved by a third mystery, and in which the resulting mystery is in flat contradiction with the dictates of the moral faculty, can scarcely be regarded as a satisfactory logical process.

intellect into a region which lies beyond its sphere. *To us*, indeed, the spectacle of the Eternal Son taking our nature, and dying on the cross, is a tremendous mystery of love; it is so represented by the sacred writers; and is, most likely, regarded in the same light, even by beings of higher order than ourselves. But, *considered as a transaction between the Two Divine Persons*, the death of Jesus is an event whose nature is absolutely and hopelessly unknown to us, because the materials for thought and speculation are wanting. The ablest man who ever walked this earth is as incompetent as an infant or a savage, to form a conception of what took place between the Father and the Son when Jesus gave up the ghost on Calvary; and yet, to deduce an inference as to "the great heinousness of guilt" from His death, that event must be considered *as a transaction between the Father and the Son*. Some theologians have gone so far as to speculate on the probability that, in consequence of the death of Jesus, this little globe of ours is the cynosure of the celestial spheres; and this is another instance of the same confusion—confusion of things in relation to us, with things in relation to God.—For how can any one venture to deny that in some other parts of creation events may take place, or may have taken place, which, if we knew them, would to us appear equally stupendous?

The argument of Archbishop Magee may, in fact, be regarded as "a specimen of the confident manner in which men of all ages, and under all religious systems, have been prone to dogmatize upon the highest matters of speculation, upon no better basis than the absence of all materials for speculating at all."—Aristotle endeavours to prove that the happiness of the gods

consists in contemplation. His argument is based on the ground that we cannot ascribe to them moral attributes like our own, inasmuch as there would be no scope for them to operate—if there be no pain, how can there be fortitude, if no evil desires, how can there be temperance? In other words,—The happiness of the gods must consist in contemplation, for, *we cannot conceive* in what else it can consist.* Magee argues that the heinousness of sin must be something transcendent, because *we cannot conceive*, under other circumstances, the necessity for so great an atonement. The error involved in both arguments is precisely the same—a deficiency of materials for Thought to operate upon, is confounded with a logical impossibility.†

“It is quite true,” says Dr. Salmon, “that we who are deeply stained with sin ourselves, and who live among sinners, must form most inadequate conceptions of the malignity of sin.” This I do not dispute. I admit it unreservedly. The further we advance towards moral perfection—the nearer we approach our Creator—we shall see, I doubt not, all the more clearly, how dreadful it must be to act in opposition to His most Holy Will. Thus only can we understand what St. Paul meant when he called himself “the chief of sinners.”‡ This was no piece of idle declamation. He meant it literally. Good and holy as we should have considered him to be, there

* *τί λείπεται πλὴν θεωρία;*

† Some valuable remarks on this species of confusion will be found in Mr. Mansel's *Prolegomena Logica*, chap. viii. pp. 273-7, (2nd Edition). The same logical vice pervades all the ‘theories’ of the doctrine of the Atonement, and, I may add, all the arguments of the objectors to that doctrine; but to enter upon this subject would be out of place here.

‡ 1 Tim. i. 15.

was perhaps no man then living who had a deeper conviction of the intensity of his own sin.

But the fact that the subjective feeling of the malignity of sin, increases with the acuteness of the moral faculty, must not be pushed to a consequence which violates a fundamental principle of Ethics. That an offender should be held responsible for that amount *only* of moral illumination which he possessed *when he committed the offence*, must be laid down as the basis of any just judgment upon his guilt.* If, under some new conditions of being, the moral perception of the sinner should be raised, so as to enable him to view a past sinful act in a wholly new light; and if, in consequence of his intensified conscience, he should be held liable to a tremendous punishment, the judgment would be pronounced, by every moral philosopher, to be a flagrant act of injustice. The improved moral faculty can legitimately increase the penalty only on *subsequent* transgressions. We never think of judging acts of the fifteenth century by the moral standard of the nineteenth.

But the theory that a creature may fairly be held responsible for an act of sin, at the tribunal of a higher conscience than that which he possessed when he committed it, may be most easily exposed by the *reductio ad absurdum*,—and indeed the same method is eminently applicable to most of the defences of

* The only exception to this general principle is the case of the man who has blunted and deadened the voice of conscience by habitual sin. Such a person may be held responsible, by the light of his primitive conscience, even for acts committed when that conscience had become dim. The principle itself is plainly recognized in the Collect for the twelfth Sunday after Trinity, when we pray—"Pour down upon us the abundance of thy mercy; forgiving us those things *whereof our conscience is afraid*."

Eternal Punishment, which are based upon Ethical grounds. Let us apply the process to a particular case—A tiger springing from an Indian jungle, seizes a traveller, carries him off, and devours him. The brute does not know that he is doing anything wrong. But it is quite possible to conceive that, in some future state of existence, the Almighty might confer upon him sufficient moral perception to understand that it was a serious crime to destroy, wilfully, a being higher than himself in the scale of creation, and upon whom the Ruler of the world had devolved authority over all the lower animals. Could we, then, consider the tiger, convinced of sin, to be *justly* liable to everlasting pain?

Or, to take another example—Any who have had much to do with young children, are aware that they attain to a knowledge of right and wrong at a very early age indeed. A quick little child of two years old, or even younger, knows very well that it is naughty to get into a passion and strike his mother or his nurse. His elders, however, do not think a great deal of his little ebullition of temper, and consider it amply expiated by sending him to bed. But the child may die suddenly in his sin. Will the "All Merciful" consign him to everlasting tortures? Why not? It is true, *we* think lightly of his sin, but "we who are deeply stained with sin ourselves, and who live among sinners, must form most inadequate conceptions of the malignity of sin." And, further,—to anticipate another, and most horrible, argument,—the eternal torments of the child may be of use in other parts of the universe, by acting as a warning to their more favoured inhabitants, and keeping them steady in the right path, "by the terri-

ble spectacle of the results of indulged sin"—a spectacle which, "for all we can tell," may be more strikingly beneficial from the fact of its being a child that suffers!

And this detestable conclusion is simply a logical development of the principles on which such arguments are based. He who accepts a theory must be prepared to stand by its legitimate consequences. But where is the man who would dare to come forward and say that any conceivable amount of intense bliss, accruing to the inhabitants of the spheres which roll round Alioth or Algol, from the contemplation of the everlasting agony of his child, would avail to dispel his sorrow? What power could stop the silent judgment of his conscience on the being who passed the sentence?

According to Mr. Mansel, the whole apparent force of the moral objection to eternal punishment rests upon two purely gratuitous assumptions. "It is assumed, in the first place, that God's punishment of sin in the world to come is so far analogous to man's administration of punishment in this world, that it will take place as a special infliction, not as a natural consequence. And it is assumed, in the second place, that punishment will be inflicted solely with reference to the sins committed during the earthly life;—that the guilt will continue finite, while the misery is prolonged to infinity."* Let us consider these assumptions.

As for the former, I presume that Mr. Mansel, in holding, with Bishop Butler, that the punishment of sin in the next world may take place as a natural consequence, does not mean to deny that this natural consequence is simply the operation of laws ordained

* *Bampton Lectures. Lect. vii.*

by God Himself. If this be so,—and I will not cast upon Mr. Mansel the imputation of denying it,—I cannot see how the *moral* aspect of the question is, in the slightest degree, altered. The moral objection is—the infliction of unending torments involves infinite cruelty. Mr. Mansel's reply is—God inflicts these torments by a general law. What on earth has that to do with the question?

As for the second assumption—"that punishment will be inflicted solely with reference to the sins committed during the earthly life,"—the reply, that sin may continue beyond the grave, is a favorite argument with the defenders of eternal punishment. Archer Butler, Mansel, and Salmon, all dilate upon it; and I do not dispute the assertion; the continuance of sin is possible, perhaps probable. "Can an immortal soul," asks Mr. Mansel, "incur God's wrath and condemnation, only so long as it is united to a mortal body?" I am quite ready to grant the possibility; but we may put a counter-question—"Can an immortal soul obtain God's forgiveness, only so long as it is united to a mortal body?" I cannot see on what *a priori* grounds this question must be answered in the negative.

But this particular argument may perhaps be best met by a dilemma. The damned either can or cannot avoid sinning in their dreadful home. If we hold the latter alternative, the argument, considered as a justification of eternal punishment on moral grounds, is simply a contemptible quibble, wholly unworthy of the three eminent men whose arguments are under discussion: if we adopt the former, I cannot see how these writers can avoid at least a *possibility* of restoration for some of the lost; for, I can hardly think

that they would maintain that if, in the midst of his torments, one of the wretched beings were to abandon his sin, he would still be detained in hopeless agony.*

I come now to the consideration of the argument in support of eternal punishment, which, in reference to ethical science, must be regarded as the worst of all; the worst at least of any which I intend to discuss.† It may be very shortly stated. The everlasting torture of a few may be necessary in order to confirm the everlasting happiness of a great many.

This, I say, considered as an ethical position, is by far the worst of the arguments we have yet met with. That the eternal suffering of A may be useful to B, or, to put it more strongly, may be indispensable to the happiness of B, is not even a palliation for its infliction. Each individual's case must be judged on

* And yet there is a passage in one of Dr. Salmon's sermons from which, I fear, it must be inferred that he would maintain this terrible position. He says—p. 12—"It seems a sufficient answer to any objection drawn from the (eternal) punishment of the wicked as inconsistent with the justice of God, that He has so constituted things, that if at any time they should cease to deserve to suffer, the bitterest part of their suffering must at once cease." By "the bitterest part of their suffering," he means, their sense of irreconcilable separation from God. I should surely have thought that if, at any time, a creature "should cease to deserve to suffer" at the hand of the Infinitely Just, *all* his suffering—not merely "the bitterest part of his suffering"—would cease at once.

† There is one argument for Eternal Punishment which I have not noticed, as it is too atrocious for discussion. Some Calvinists maintain that the cause of its infliction is to manifest the great power and glory of God. As for this theory I fully agree with the following remarks of Mr. Theodore Parker: "The notion that men are 'tortured for the glory of God' deserves all the scorn, all the hate, all the ribaldry, all the mockery, which it ever met with from Lucian and Lucretius, from Pomponatius and Voltaire, from Thomas Paine and Ritter, and Feuerbach; their hammer is not at all too heavy for their hard work."—*On the Function and Influence of the idea of Immortal Life.*

its own merits, and on its own merits alone. These writers entertain very singular views on the subject of happiness and misery. They appear to regard them as in some way analogous to commodities which can be bought and sold by the pound weight. Their theory involves the belief that a being who inflicts a certain amount of suffering on one of two individuals, neither of whom is supposed to deserve either reward or punishment, may be regarded as completely absolved from the charge of cruelty, provided that he confers precisely the same amount of happiness upon the other; and, further, that if the amount of happiness conferred, be greater than the amount of suffering inflicted, still neglecting the merits of the recipients, the distributor, considered as a moral agent, must be classed as positively benevolent.

Now, absurd as such reasoning manifestly appears when applied to human beings, and destructive as it is to the rudiments of morality, theologians have not hesitated to apply it to the dealings of the Ruler of the world with His creatures. They teach us that the unending tortures of A may be useful in confirming B in his security, and that this is a "justification" of eternal punishment. It may be supposed that I am stating their reasoning in an exaggerated form. But here are Dr. Salmon's own words:

"It would seem like vindictiveness, if God were to raise men from the dead, and unite their bodies and souls, only in order that, having tormented them for a number of years, He might then consign them to annihilation. If annihilation be no part of God's scheme, we can understand that a soul, as long as it exists, must bear the lot in which it has involved itself. But if it be God's intention to annihilate any,

pity would suggest that He will do so without inflicting preliminary torment. As justice is administered by modern humanity, criminals whose life is deemed to be inconsistent with the welfare of society are removed from the world without the infliction of unnecessary pain; and we shudder as we read how, in other days, hours of lingering torture must be sustained before the suffering wretch dared hope for the long desired mercy-stroke. Further, it is more difficult to imagine purposes served by the temporary sufferings of the wicked after this life than by their eternal punishment. Sufferings which are not supposed to end in reformation must be inflicted for the benefit, not of the offender himself, but of others. Now, we can understand that the perpetual exhibition, in the case of a few, of the terrible consequences of sin, may be the means appointed for maintaining in the many a wholesome horror of sin. It may be questioned whether any transient exercise of judgment would suffice to produce an impression certain to endure throughout eternity.”*

This passage is amply sufficient to show that I have not exaggerated the argument, for it teaches us that though, *on the merits of the case alone*, “it would seem like vindictiveness” on the part of God to torture His creatures for a time—and, of course, *a fortiori*, for eternity—yet the infliction is justified by the benefits which the hideous exhibition may produce

* *Sermon on the Eternity of Future Punishment*, p. 7,—and to the same effect: “The incorrigible may be allowed to remain” (i.e. in everlasting torture) “if their continuance be for the good of the whole. And who can tell but that this practical proof of the permanence of the effects of sin, may be the necessary means for making all know how God hates sin, and thereby of making them hate and dread it themselves.”—*Appendix*. Note E. p. 49.

in some unknown regions of the universe. The feelings which such propositions excite in me may possibly arise from some defect in my moral constitution, but I unreservedly state that I know no words sufficiently strong to express my abhorrence of such doctrine. Vicarious suffering, even of the innocent for the guilty, is in truth a common law on earth; but it is not infinite, and the ideas of finite and infinite differ not in degree but in kind; above all, we have the means of justifying it in our belief of an unknown world beyond the grave where all that is amiss here will be set right. But this solution, the strongest of all the natural arguments for a future life, this last and worst argument in support of eternal punishment tears away from us.*

But, in order to test its validity, let us again take a definite example. Suppose it were offered to the father of six children to take his choice whether his whole family should be annihilated in death, or that five of them should be received into heaven, and the sixth turned into hell. Let us suppose, further, that the misery of the lost child shall exactly equal, in intensity as well as in duration, the happiness of one of the saved. Should the father adopt the latter alternative, the unalloyed bliss of *four* of his children will produce a clear preponderance in the scale of total happiness. But where is the man who would dare to make such a choice? Which of the six little ones would he select as the victim whose undying pain should secure his brothers' and sisters' immortal joy? Except the wretches who blaspheme their Maker's Holy Name by returning Him thanks for damning

* On the Ethics of Vicarious Suffering, see Appendix, Note A.

their neighbours to eternal woe,* is there any one alive who would not joyfully embrace the other offer,—who would not suffer himself and all his children to sink back for ever to the silent void from which they were called to life by the voice of God, rather than purchase the joys of heaven at such a price?

Now, if we should make this choice in the case of our own children, it is manifest from the fundamental rules of ethics, that we should make precisely the same with respect to every one. In other words, no *moral* being could consent to purchase eternal happiness at the price of the eternal misery of any sentient creature; and we are thus again led to the conclusion, that the future life, if the commonly received view of it be correct, is a curse to the human race—not to *the wicked only, but to the totality*—For, if annihilation of the totality should be tendered as the alternative, no *moral* being could refuse to accept it.

And, in deducing this consequence, I have in reality conceded to some of the defenders of eternal punishment one point of very considerable importance. I have admitted the saved to be *the many*, the lost to be *the few*. Most of these writers do not, indeed, insist upon this; they admit the damnation of the vast majority; but Dr. Salmon, pressed by the tremendous difficulties of the question, differs from them. "I

* I remember having read, in some dissenting magazine, (though I cannot recover the passage,) a life of some eminent female saint of their persuasion. One morning she was observed to be unusually zealous in praising the Lord. Being asked the reason, she replied that 'great grace had been given her.' On being further interrogated as to the special mode in which the 'grace' had been manifested, it appeared that she had been enabled truly and heartily to rejoice in the contemplation of the everlasting damnation of the wicked; meaning thereby nearly all her neighbours. There can be small doubt from what spirit that 'grace' came.

cannot but believe that the number who will benefit by this lesson will be beyond comparison greater than that of those who have rejected the mercy of God. Pious men have sometimes dogmatized, in a manner for which Scripture gives no warrant, about the proportion of the number of the saved to the lost, and have reduced to so infinitesimal an amount the number of the former as to revolt men against doctrine which would seem to represent Satan as more successful in destroying than God in saving.”*

We must, therefore—waving for a moment the essential injustice of inflicting eternal torments upon A for the benefit of B—examine the probability of the assertion, that more “beyond comparison” will be saved than lost. As for the dogmatism respecting the proportion of these numbers, it is perfectly evident that if a writer assigns one in a hundred, or one in a thousand, or one in a million, thereby meaning to state a *definite proportion* between the saved and lost, he must be simply a presumptuous fool; and, for such dogmatism, Scripture indeed gives no warrant. But, I take it, most of those who use similar language intend, by such expressions, only to assert that the ratio is one of very considerable inequality, the great preponderance of number being on the side of the lost; and, taking the words in this sense, I cannot see how their position can be assailed. In the first place we have the explicit words of Jesus Christ Himself peremptorily determining the question—“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and

* Appendix. Note E. p. 49.

narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."* These words are explicit; no form of speech could be clearer. There is not one of the denunciations of Eternal Punishment in which the grammatical signification of the sentence is more plain and definite; and what right have we in this case, any more than in the other, to depart from the plain grammatical sense? *Others* may do so, consistently with their principles of interpretation, but surely Dr. Salmon cannot claim any such right.

But, further, not only have we the supreme authority of Christ, but the entire course of our own observation, and every page of history, ancient and modern, sacred and profane, backs His words. That this is so, can hardly require discussion. We are not indeed the judges of our fellow-men, but it is impossible for us to avoid forming an *opinion* as to the spiritual condition of the majority of them. We have only to look about us as we walk through the crowded streets of the city—among the stolid agricultural population—among the wealthy mercantile classes—we may even go into the churches—how many of those around us are walking along the narrow way? How many of them are—to use the technical “evangelical” expression—“in Jesus”? Every one else, no matter how moral and decorous and generous he may be, is damned to all eternity.

And, do we doubt whether a similar state of affairs has existed through all past time since the creation of man? We turn to secular history for our answer; and what is history? Ninety-nine hundredths of it—to use again the objectionable proportion—is the history

* Matt. vii. 13, 14.

of human sin—we turn to ecclesiastical history, and find it, if possible, worse. As far as we have any means for ascertaining it, the devil's title as Prince of this World, has been stoutly maintained, in every place, and through all historic time. "The whole world lieth in wickedness,"* is the language of inspiration; and although when those words were penned, the Christian church was a very small body, while it now spreads over half the earth, they are still true. For we must remember that as the fold of Christ expanded in area, it unquestionably deteriorated in purity—the *intensive* development appears to have varied inversely as the *extensive*; and thus the body of real Christians is, even now, recognized as small.

In fact, if we confine our thoughts to the human race, I can see only one way in which even a shadow of a ground can be given for the assertion that the great majority of mankind shall be finally saved,—and that is by assuming that in the lapse of ages yet to come the proportion which has hitherto existed between the lost and the saved will be reversed. But this is altogether visionary. The civilized portions of the globe are doubtless making progress in morality, but we do not see as yet the slightest symptom of a general conversion of the world to God. Meanwhile each day, each hour, is swelling the frightful roll of perdition; while the redeemed, who are in numbers to surpass the lost "beyond comparison," are but slowly entering the mansions of their Father's house. Our Lord has told us that the day and hour of His return, was, even to Himself, unknown; that it cometh as a thief in the night; but this theory would postpone

* 1 John v. 19.

it inevitably to ages so remote that the previous era of man must be but a span in comparison.

It is clear that Dr. Salmon was aware of the difficulty of his position, for he proceeds—"Even if it could be proved that more of mankind perish than are saved, still it has been revealed to us that the human race does not comprise the whole of God's rational creatures, and we might venture to hold the belief which our knowledge of God's goodness persuades us of." So we come back again to the horrible notion that the mass of mankind are to be eternally tortured for the benefit of other, more favoured, parts of the creation. What a hideous picture does this present us of the world which God *so loved* that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life! God so loved the world that He hath set it forth to His creation as "the terrible spectacle of the results of indulged sin"!

And yet He did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*

But we have not yet done with the passage which I have quoted (p. 49). We must now consider its final clause—"We can understand that the perpetual exhibition, in the case of a few, of the terrible consequences of sin, may be the means appointed for maintaining in the many a wholesome horror of sin. It may be questioned whether any transient exercise of judgment would suffice to produce an impression certain to endure throughout eternity." On reading these words it would naturally occur to us that, even

* John iii. 16, 17.

if this everlasting spectacle of torture were absolutely indispensable to secure, beyond fear of change, the perfect fruition of the celestials, and if, as before, we were to wave the moral objections to this view, still *a change of victims* might surely take place, and those who had undergone a protracted term of suffering, might be permitted to sink to everlasting rest as from a frightful dream. But no—this is sternly rejected. “The supposition of temporary sufferings of the wicked, to be succeeded by their annihilation, appears to be quite destitute of evidence, while it does not remove a single difficulty which attends the doctrine of Eternal Punishment.”*

There are, undoubtedly, persons to be found, calling themselves Christians, who openly profess their delight in gloating over the torments in store for their fellow-creatures. And it is quite plain that, to the minds of such as these, the cessation, or even any alleviation of the sufferings of the damned, so far from removing any difficulty, would form a very serious difficulty in itself; it would *ipso facto* deprive them of a large share of the joys of heaven. But, as I know that the writer, whose words I have just quoted, has no sympathy with the tenets of this repulsive school, I am quite at a loss to understand how he could ever have brought himself to write such a sentence—he can hardly have reflected much on the full meaning of its final clause.

On the twenty-first of January, 1535, a dismal tragedy was exhibited in Paris. In consequence of the detection of certain secret intrigues in which Francis I. had been engaged with the infidel Solymán the Magnificent, grave doubts had arisen as to the orthodoxy

* Sermon before quoted, p. 8.

of the French king—doubts which his notorious connection with the schismatic Henry VIII. had no tendency to remove. Irritated by such unworthy suspicions, the descendant of St. Louis resolved to put beyond all question his zeal for the Holy Catholic Church; and, in those days, the burning of heretics was universally recognized as the most appropriate display of fiery zeal. But, as the suspicions, just mentioned, were very strong, he felt himself constrained to make some *special* manifestation; and therefore, despising the mawkish humanity of the Inquisitors, who finished off their victims by one steady, uninterrupted roast, he contrived a new machine which had the advantage of very greatly protracting the execution. In six different parts of Paris, wheels, of large diameter, were erected, so arranged that each of them, revolving slowly, with a wretched "heretic" attached to one of the spokes, plunged him for a few seconds into a roaring furnace, once in each revolution. The torment was thus enormously protracted, and the machine was in the highest degree creditable to its two inventors, Francis and the Devil. We can imagine ourselves present at the frightful scene. Let us even grant the wickedness of the "heretic." Should we not rejoice greatly when the shrieks of the victim, becoming weaker and weaker at each successive plunge into the bath of fire, showed us that the torture was nearly over? Should we not execrate the barbarity of Francis in devising this infernal engine to lengthen out his pain?*

But, we are told this is all nonsense; the wheel may just as well revolve, and the victim shriek in agony

* I very much doubt that even Francis himself, would have protracted his victim's suffering for twelve months, had he been able to do it.

for ever; for, the supposition of temporary sufferings of the wicked, to be succeeded by his annihilation, *does not remove a single difficulty which attends the doctrine of Eternal Punishment!*

Yes it does remove a difficulty. It removes the main difficulty. It removes a difficulty so great that, in comparison with it, all other difficulties vanish in the back-ground—the difficulty of reconciling everlasting torments inflicted on His creatures, with the character of Him “whose tender mercies are over *all his works*.”* What tender mercies are over those who are damned to eternal torments, and are not they supposed to be His works? If everlasting misery is the result of “tender mercies,” I should very much like to know what would be the result of deadly hatred. We can, indeed, understand the words of the Psalmist, if, as before, we agree to understand by “tender mercy” something quite different from our ordinary conception of mercy, and diametrically contrary to it. And yet the attributes of the Almighty,—His Justice, His Mercy, His Truth,—if not to us *unmeaning terms*, must be regarded as *analogous*, though no doubt very imperfectly analogous, to the corresponding affections in mankind.†

In estimating the vast importance of correct views on the subject of the eternity of future punishment, the circumstance, already alluded to, that the civilized portion of the human race, has, for a long time past, made steady progress in morality, must not be overlooked. Any such doctrine must, to the civilized world of the nineteenth century, stand in a relation, totally

* Ps. cxlv. 9.

† The remaining clause, that the supposition of temporary sufferings of the wicked, to be succeeded by their annihilation, *appears to be quite destitute of evidence*, will be examined further on.

different from that which it bore to the mediæval semi-barbarians. And, I doubt not, that, as time rolls on, this difference will continually become more striking. I am very far indeed from wishing to extenuate the peculiar vices which usually attend a high state of civilization, but there can be no question that the brutal indifference to human suffering, or, to speak more correctly, the barbarous delight in witnessing its infliction in the most frightful forms, which characterized the middle ages, has greatly diminished. In this particular respect, the improvement in public feeling has been, for several centuries, steadily progressive. Exhibitions of torture, which were witnessed with applause in the streets of London, in the days of the Tudors, would have raised a riot in the middle of the last century; and yet it is well-known that a judge in the last century was capable of sending to the gallows a girl of eighteen, with an infant at her breast, for attempting to steal, when starving, a small piece of cloth from a shop in London. This steady increase in humanity is an indisputable fact. The doctrine that the Supreme Being designs to torture many of His creatures everlastingly, may, possibly, not have been much out of place in an age when a nobleman was capable of gouging out the eyes of a little child with his own noble hands, in consequence of having received some insult from its father.* But the fundamental principles of morality are now better understood; the doctrine of eternal punishment contradicts them flatly; and I have no doubt that this essential contradiction will, day by day, be more clearly discerned.†

* A well-authenticated feat of the Norman baron, Robert de Belesme. (Eleventh Century.)

† Richard Baxter was a very worthy man, and yet he thought his

Now it is admitted, by almost every class of Christians, that the *moral* evidences of the truth of revealed religion, derived from the purity of its teaching, form a most essential portion of its defences; a portion too, which, so far from suffering from the lapse of time, will continually acquire strength. Historical evidence, on the other hand, is, by its very nature, liable to deteriorate; our ancient manuscripts will, in the course of centuries, decay or be destroyed; a competent knowledge of the original languages of the sacred books and contemporary documents may not be kept up. I am very far, indeed, from admitting that this species of evidence will ever become evanescent, but it is essentially liable to become weaker, as ages roll on. To the believer in the truth of Christianity, therefore, it must be most important that the moral evidences of his faith should be preserved unimpeachable; and what will become of the moral evidence, if assent to a proposition which cuts up morality by the roots, is peremptorily demanded as essential?

Without doubt, the aspect of Nature is often stern, and dark, and threatening. I admit that "the blasted trunk, the barren rock, the frowning precipice, the roar of the whirlpool, the fury of the storm," do, indeed, speak a terrible language. All point with unfaltering finger to Death, yes to Death Eternal, as the wages due to Sin. But it is useless to seek in external Nature, an analogy for the Nightmare Life-in-Death, "who

famous argument about the flea (quoted by Dr. Salmon,—Appendix, p. 41) sound and irrefragable; and, very probably it may have been generally admitted as valid, two hundred years ago. Should the world last two hundred years longer, I doubt not that the notion of God's torturing eternally one class of His creatures, for the behoof of another class, will then be regarded with as much scorn as 'Baxter's flea' is now.

thicks man's blood with cold." It is not to be found. Indeed the ultimate absorption, by death temporal, of all that ever live in this world, renders it impossible to find a parallel case. All Butler's analogies for the future state of the wicked, point either to finite punishment or eternal death. None of them touch the conception of Infinity. And, expand the finite as you please, *the difference between the finite and the infinite will still be infinite itself.**

And thus, in spite of the inexorable sternness of the code which binds the elements of the world, we can hold to our faith that God is Love, and that Love is the grand, unalterable Law of His creation—

"Though Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieks against the creed."—

Though the blazing bolt of the wrath of God was not lifted at the *Auto da Fe*, the crusades of De Montfort, or the noyades of Carrier: though He, whose breath could have withered the destroyer in a moment, gave no external help to those who cried to Him, we doubt not that He pitied them; we still look forward in hope for the day which shall end all sorrow—a day "for whose bright dawn the whole creation groans." But this is only because we are not so bad as part of our creed. We do not really think as hardly of God as our ecclesiastical formulas would teach us. When we praise Him, bless Him, glorify Him, and give thanks to Him for His great glory, we lay aside, for the moment, our belief in the sentence of Eternal Fire thundered forth against our fellow-men.

And yet, most of us give assent, at least verbal assent, to propositions which, if true, would represent

* It is positively marvellous how *an able mathematician* can manage, when he turns to Theology, to overlook this fact.

this world as infinitely worse than a huge and hideous charnel house; which, if truly believed, and at all realized in the imagination, ought, as Mr. Maurice says, to drive us mad, and would surely separate the two sexes in monasteries and nunneries, so that, at all events, the accursed race should increase no more.

For, if it be indeed our destiny, as blazing beacons, shining horribly through all eternity, to mark for the dwellers of the stars of heaven each turning from the ways of God, the hearts of those much favoured beings must be harder than the adamant itself, if the heap of misery already accumulated, is not sufficient for their warning, and will not confirm them in their blissful lives, beyond all fear of change.* For us—

“so steep'd in misery,
Surely 'twere better not to be.”

I have now brought to a conclusion my remarks on the doctrine of Eternal Punishment, considered as a question of Ethics; and, also, my examination of the arguments of its supporters, considered in reference to the same science. Mr. Froude remarks: “I know but one man, of more than miserable intellect, who in these modern times has dared defend eternal punishment on the score of *justice*, and that is Leibnitz; a man who, if I know him rightly, chose the subject from its difficulty as an opportunity for the display of his genius, and cared so little for the truth that his conclusions did not cost his heart a single pang.”† It is manifest, from

* It is well to bear in mind that the whole of this most immoral theory of the eternal torture of *A for the benefit of B*, is a pure invention of the defenders of eternal punishment. There is not the smallest shadow of evidence for it, beyond their bare assertion.

† *Nemesis of Faith*, p. 17. This theory of the origin of the outrageous argument of Leibnitz, may remind us of an incident in the life of Paley. In 1762 Mr. Jebb and Mr. Watson were chosen the University Moderators for the first time, and soon afterwards

the distinguished names connected with the arguments I have been discussing, that we cannot now say that this doctrine is undefended by, at least a few, able men. Still, notwithstanding all their ability and zeal, I think it has been made clear that their arguments are based upon principles which would reverse all Ethical science. How *such men* could have ever brought themselves to make use of *such arguments*, is to the present writer an insoluble enigma.*

Watson sent Paley an Act. It being in consequence necessary for him to choose some questions for public disputation in the schools, he made choice of two: the first upon "The unlawfulness of Capital Punishment," the second "The Eternity of Hell Torments as contradictory to the Divine Attributes." The nature of the questions chosen by Paley, was speedily rumoured in the University, and many of its members were alarmed at the latter question. The master of Paley's college (Christ's College) was appealed to; who almost immediately insisted upon his relinquishing his objectionable theme. Paley, anxious to comply, waited upon the moderator to obtain the requisite permission to withdraw his question. Watson, however, refused to allow of the proposed withdrawal. "The best way for you to satisfy the scruples of these gentlemen," said he, "will be for you to defend the eternity of hell torments. Hutton, of St. John's, your first opponent, will certainly stiffen you; but I must help you out, and we will support the question as well as we can."—(See Meadley's *Life of Paley*, p. 32.) The question, as thus amended, stood thus: *Æternitas poenarum non contradicit Divinis Attributis*; and we are told that Paley displayed great ability in its defence. This we can easily understand. That he possessed much acuteness, and used it too, to the great and lasting benefit of the Christian Evidences, are facts abundantly manifested by the *Horæ Paulinæ*. But any one who is acquainted with his repulsive system of Ethics—according to which, the pleasure of saving your father's life is identical in kind with the pleasure of eating your dinner when very hungry, the two differing only in degree—will not feel much surprised at his defending any atrocity as an intellectual exercise.

* "All the attempts yet made to reconcile the doctrine with divine justice and mercy are calculated to make us blush alike for the human heart that can strive to justify such a creed, and for the human intellect which can delude itself into a belief that it has succeeded in such justification."—Greg. *The Creed of Christendom*, p. 259. This is the statement of a writer whose views are in a very high degree harsh and stern.

And we must not forget that, in their case, the common rule that a refuted argument *ought to go for nothing*, does not apply. That rule is only valid when the employer of the fallacious reasoning is either incompetent or ignorant, and then it may be fairly urged that his weak arguments should not be considered detrimental to his cause, inasmuch as an abler and better informed man might very possibly produce more cogent reasons in support of the proposition, whatever it may be. But the case is altogether different when the arguments of able and well-informed men, who zealously endeavour to establish a certain proposition, are shown to be untenable; this very refutation becomes at once a strong positive argument *against* their position; for, if such men as these can produce nothing better in support of their theory, it is not likely that much can be said by any one in its behalf.

I proceed, in the next place, to the consideration of the Scriptural Evidence for the doctrine of Eternal Punishment.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE FOR THE DOCTRINES
OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT AND ETERNAL DEATH.

WHAT, then, is the evidence in the pages of Holy Writ, for a doctrine which contradicts the voice of God within us—leads straight to consequences which have driven many, and ought to drive all who believe them, mad—and can be defended only by arguments which are based on the reversal of the common axioms of morality? Surely, to be admitted at all, the proofs must be plain, copious, irrefragable. From every page of the Bible the dreadful sentence must glare upon us in letters of fire.

But is this evidence indeed so clear and indisputable as all the defenders of the doctrine, with one voice, proclaim it to be? “Deny it,” say they, “and you deny the whole Bible. Immortal life goes with everlasting punishment. There is precisely the same evidence for ‘both.’” This I flatly deny. In asserting any *strong and copious* evidence for Eternal Punishment, *three* totally different ideas are systematically confounded together.

These three are the ideas of *Future Punishment*, *Eternal Death*, and *Eternal Punishment*; each of them as I have already remarked, essentially distinct from both the others, and all three invariably confounded together by the advocates of Eternal Punishment,

F

when discussing the Scriptural evidence for their favourite dogma.

For an example of this confusion, I may refer to Dr. Salmon's enumeration of the Scripture Proofs of the doctrine of eternal punishment. He gives an extract from Mr. Keble's "Litany of our Lord's warnings," which, as he says, presents, in a compact form, a large portion of the Scripture testimony on this subject. But it presents a great deal more. The extract refers to no less than fifty-one texts. If these be examined, it will be found that, unless we expressly confound the three above-mentioned ideas, it will be absolutely impossible, by any amount of twisting or straining, to force more than *twelve* out of the fifty-one, into a reference, even indirect, to the doctrine of eternal punishment. And it is a significant fact that, if we leave out the second Epistle of St. Peter, the Epistle of Jude, and the book of Revelation—books, either of questionable genuineness, or confessedly difficult interpretation—the twelve are reduced to six.*

To avoid this confusion of the three ideas is of such extreme importance at the present stage of our discussion, that I shall, before proceeding further, give yet another example of it.

The text which is commonly adduced as affording *the* most decisive evidence for eternal punishment to be found in the whole of Scripture, is the awful sentence passed by our Lord Himself, on the traitor

* The twelve texts in the list which I admit as *prima facie* applicable to Eternal Punishment are as follows.—Isaiah xxxiii., 14; lvi., 24; Matt. xviii., 8; xxv., 46; Mark ix., 44; Luke iii., 17; 2 Pet. ii., 17; Jude 7; 13; Rev. xiv., 11; xix., 3; xxi., 8. As for the remaining thirty-nine, they might just as well have been set down at random, so far as the doctrine of Eternal Punishment is concerned.

Judas Iscariot,—“Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.”* For, it is said, if the sufferings of Judas were ever to terminate, it would *not* have been good for that man that he had not been born. His sufferings, however great and protracted, must, in this case, be *finite*, and thus be far more than counterbalanced by his ultimate happiness in the heavenly kingdom, which, as unending, is therefore infinite.†

* Matt. xxvi., 24; Mark xiv., 21.

† “Diese vom Herrn selbst seinem unglückseligen Jünger gesetzte Grabschrift ist der erschütterndste und schreckenvollste Ausspruch des ganzen Bibelbuches. Dass dies Wort in seiner buchstäblichen Strenge genommen durchaus jeden Ausweg der Hoffnung auf einstiges Heil abschneidet, weil auch dem nach Ewigkeiten der Ewigkeiten Begnadigten und Wiedergebrachten sofort sein Geborensein wieder besser würde, *dass also hier unausweichlich endlose Verdammniss bezeichnet ist*—das hat man von jeher so stark gefühlt, so vielfach vorgehalten, das liegt auch so klar am Tage, dass wir nicht erst viele Worte darüber verlieren. Das beste Zeugniß für die Unwiderruflichkeit dieses Sinnes liegt in der gekünstelten Auslegung, womit man ihm entgegen wollte, in jener Fassung nämlich, welche verstehen will: es wäre dem Sohne des Menschen besser, wenn Judas nicht geboren wäre! Gekünstelt und in hohem Grade verwerflich finden wir diese Konstruktion, obgleich sie zuerst nach dem Buchstaben ein wenig auffallenden Schein für sich hat. Es liegt nemlich sehr nahe, *καλὸν ἢν αὐτῷ* wieder auf Christum zu beziehen, wie vorhin *περὶ αὐτοῦ*, theils weil unmittelbar *ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου* vorhergeht, theils weil der Schluss mit *ὁ ἀνθρώπος ἐκεῖνος* ein andres Subjekt entgegen zu stellen scheint. Dennoch entstände so der Jesu völlig unwürdige Sinn einer selbstsüchtigen, weichlichen Klage, die wir nirgends aus seinem Munde vernehmen, die grade an diesem Ort so wenig passt, dass eben darum ungeachtet des grammatischen Scheines nur Vereinzelte zuweilen aus besonderem Grunde von dem je und je feststehenden Verständniß, wonach eine Explikation des Wehe folgen muss, abgewichen sind.”—Stier, *Die Reden des Herrn Jesu*, Sechster Theil, s. 53. This latter interpretation is indeed artificial, and gives to the words a meaning unworthy of the Saviour. But there is not the slightest occasion to have recourse to it.

Before leaving this passage I may remark that Clement of Rome, of his own authority, applies the sentence on Judas to the Corinthian

See how coolly it is here assumed, as a self-evident proposition, that the termination of suffering must necessarily be followed by the endless joys of heaven; that there is no such thing as Eternal Death. These two texts, taken literally,—and I see no good reason for impugning their literal signification,—are indeed decisive against the doctrine of an Universal Restoration, but, as arguments for Eternal Punishment, they are absolutely beside the question. If Judas Iscariot had been annihilated, body and soul, when he went out and hanged himself, the words of the Saviour, taken in their most literal sense, would still have been unquestionably true, “good were it for that man if he had never been born!” He was a wicked man, and therefore a miserable man, who, after his few wretched years on earth, left behind him a name which has become a by-word to indicate everything base, and mean, and darkly treacherous in human nature. Far be it from me to assert that such was the end of Judas. I do not deny the doctrine of Future Punishment; but I say that the sentence of Christ would have been, unmetaphorically, true, if Judas had perished for ever in the field of Aceldama; and thus, so far from affording an incontrovertible instance of eternal punishment, had suffered no punishment whatever beyond the grave.

We see, therefore, that, in discussing the Scriptural

schismatics; and that too, by a misquotation of the words of Christ. He admonishes them to be mindful of the words of our Lord Jesus.—*Εἶπε γάρ· “οὐαὶ τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ ἐκείνῳ· καλὸν ἦν αὐτῷ, εἰ οὐκ ἐγεννήθη, ἢ ἕνα τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν μου σκανδαλίσαι· κρεῖττον ἦν αὐτῷ, περιτεθῆναι μύλον, καὶ καταποντισθῆναι εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν, ἢ ἕνα τῶν μικρῶν μου σκανδαλίσαι.”* *I. Clementis ad Cor.* c. 46. But it appears from another passage in the same epistle, that Clement had no firm belief in any resurrection of the wicked. See Appendix, Note C.

evidence for eternal punishment, it is a matter of vital importance to discriminate steadily between these three ideas, and to be perpetually on our guard never to allow a passage which speaks only of the *future punishment* of the wicked, or only of their *everlasting destruction*, to be pressed as an argument for their *eternal punishment*. Through neglect of this caution, the impugnors of the last dogma have allowed themselves to be placed in apparent antagonism with the plain teaching of the Bible; thus giving its defenders an incalculable advantage, to which, in truth, they have not the slightest title.

The first step usually taken, on the side of the defence, is to charge the assailant with holding the doctrine of an Universal Restoration. This charge being once admitted, the artillery of Scripture is brought into play with tremendous effect; and, as long as its supreme authority is admitted, the champion of the commonly received doctrine, can easily drive his assailant, discomfited, from the field. For, the scriptural evidence, not only for future punishment, but also for eternal death, is, indeed, copious and unmistakable.* The believer in the inspiration of the Bible who denies either of these, must therefore be prepared to meet a formidable array of texts, and to adopt such principles of interpretation as would extract all meaning from the Word of God. And, not only is he in direct opposition to Revelation, but the dictates of the moral faculty give him no support. Eternal death, unlike eternal punishment, does not shock the

* I may here remark that Butler's famous analogy taken from the "waste of seeds," so far as tenable at all, bears upon eternal death, not eternal punishment. This is obvious, but is often mistaken.

conscience. No ethical system can be disturbed by the proposition that He who gave life may, at His own good will and pleasure, revoke His gift.

Here, then, I must explicitly state that I do not hold the doctrine of an Universal Restoration. That some of the wicked,—it is not for me to state the proportion, but perhaps the majority of mankind,—‘shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,’* I do not take upon myself to deny. And, as I do not deny it, I refuse to allow this, or any similar text, to be brought up against me. The sentence “thou shalt surely die,”† may, I grant, mean death eternal; but, to me, “death,” and “endless life in torment,” are two distinct conceptions; and I cannot admit the assertion of the one as the doom of the sinner, to be equivalent to the assertion of the other. The foolish virgins, in the parable, were answered, “Verily, I say unto you, I know you not,”‡ but this

* 2 Thess. i. 9.

† Gen. ii. 17.

‡ Matt. xxv. 12.—These three texts, and also the sentence on Judas, are among the fifty-one proofs of Eternal Punishment, referred to above. It is curious that the verse, which perhaps more explicitly than any in the Bible, teaches eternal torment, is omitted. “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.” Rev. xx. 10. I must admit that *no* amount of manuscript, or other evidence, would suffice to convince me of the genuineness of this text, as it stands at present,—*one* MS. indeed omits the words “for ever and ever.” The view of our Lord’s character which might be naturally derived from Mr. Keble’s “Litany,” is that which is uniformly presented by the church of Rome. Can any one wonder at the prevalence of Mariolatry in that church? The words of Jesus are even *misquoted* in that Litany. One of the versicles is “JESU, Who didst mention not only the worm and the fire, but *their* worm and *their* fire,—what *each one* suffers,—as undying.” It is Isaiah, not Jesus, who uses the expression “their” fire, and that too, in reference to the

refusal of admittance cannot be urged in proof of their everlasting life in fire.

But, supposing it were conceded that these and all similar passages, are beside the question, what is to be done with the twelve texts which, I have admitted, *may* refer* to Eternal Punishment? We have now arrived at the grand problem.

In entering upon its examination, I trust I shall not be misunderstood to assert that there are no passages in the New Testament, relating to the question, which present formidable difficulties.† This would be simple dishonesty. Such passages exist, and though the difficulties involved in them may be much extenuated, they cannot be wholly removed. To insist, however, that they must be wholly removed before the common interpretation can be abandoned, is unreasonable. For, the question is one of conflicting improbabilities, and what we have to decide is, which of two interpretations involves less difficulty. Nor is this any peculiarity of the question before us. All who are, in the smallest degree, conversant with Biblical controversies, are aware that there is not one of the leading articles of our faith which is not beset with difficulties. Of this, the mere fact of the existence of those innumerable

carcasses,—the dead bodies of the men who had sinned.—(Is. lxvi. 24.) Both Isaiah and Jesus certainly *do* employ the words “*their worm.*”

* In some of these the reference is very remote, *e. g.* “the mist of darkness,” (2 Pet. ii. 17) and “the blackness of darkness,” (Jude, 13) being reserved for ever for the sinner, point much more naturally to his eternal death than to his eternal punishment. But I have admitted both these texts among the proofs of the latter, as it might be said that the wicked are to be shut up alive everlastingly in the dark.

† There are only *three* such, in my opinion,—Matt. xviii. 8; Mark ix. 43—48; and Matt. xxv. 41—46.—I might have reduced these to *two*, as the passages in Matt. xviii. and Mark ix. refer to the same discourse of our Lord.

sects which divide the Christian world, is a sufficient proof. And what right have we to expect that the doctrine of Future Punishment should be exempt from all difficulty?

We must remember what the question before us really is. It is *not*, "Are there a few texts in the Bible which, *prima facie*, assert eternal punishment?"—for, that such are to be found, is on all sides conceded—but it consists of two parts, "Are these texts, when taken in their *prima facie* interpretation, unbalanced by conflicting texts, and certain other conflicting Scriptural phenomena?" and, "Is this *prima facie* interpretation the only fair interpretation of which they are susceptible?" If affirmative answers are given to both of these, the Scriptures undoubtedly stand committed to the doctrine—unless, indeed, it can be proved that the texts in question formed no part of the original documents. But it is not difficult to show that both of them must be answered in the negative.

That the doctrine of eternal punishment is not the *unambiguous* doctrine of the Bible, may be easily shown. Not merely a little, but a great deal, is to be found in the Sacred Volume, which, though not explicitly contradicting the dogma,* certainly *tends to do so*; and,

* In fact, if I were to apply to certain passages, the same method of rigid literal interpretation, which the defenders of eternal punishment adopt with reference to those texts which seem to support their views, I might go a great deal further, and assert at once, an universal Restoration: *e. g.* "ὡςπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνήσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιηθήσονται."—1 Cor. xv. 22. For, on no principles of *literal* interpretation, are we entitled to divide the extension of πάντες in the two clauses, and it can hardly be asserted that any shall be made alive "in Christ" for the purpose of eternal damnation—and again "πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται."—Rom. xi. 26—still employing the same principles of interpretation, asserts the ultimate salvation of *all* the Jews. Israel *may* mean the elect,

therefore, I deny that a preacher is justified in asserting, as a comment on the text, "these shall go into everlasting punishment," that "we find elsewhere in the Book *nothing* to contradict our impression as to the literal meaning of the words." I proceed accordingly to the consideration of certain Biblical phenomena, which hardly admit of being reconciled with the doctrine in question.

To the question, "Which of the New Testament writers has given us the most elaborate, complete, and scientific exposition of the great doctrines of the Gospel?" few who are competent to form any opinion on the subject, would hesitate to name the Apostle Paul. Not only the most voluminous, but the best educated and most accomplished of the inspired writers, he has left no important question in theoretical Christianity undiscussed. The leading principles of the system, more or less obscurely delivered in the Gospels, are elaborated in his epistles with a copiousness of detail which we seek in vain elsewhere. It is in reading his epistles that, more than anywhere else in the New Testament, the promise of the Saviour is recalled by us—"It is expedient for you that I go away from you"—"if I depart I will send the Spirit who will guide you into all truth."*

Now we have seen already that this doctrine of eternal punishment as the destiny of the majority of the human race, is, if true, one of vital importance; it is, further, a *peculiar* doctrine of Christianity; and, for both these reasons, we might fairly hold that the great

but St. Paul does not say so. But I use such reasoning merely as an *argumentum ad hominem*; considered in any other point of view it is worthless, and worse than worthless, for it perverts the Word of God.

* John xvi. 7, 13.

Apostle of the Gentiles, ranging the whole field of Christian dogmas, would discuss it in all its bearings, and would press its consideration upon the different churches to which he wrote, with all the vigour and energy of his wondrous pen.

We turn to his writings. Do they support this reasonable presumption? Read his thirteen undoubted epistles,—add, if you choose, the epistle to the Hebrews,—do we find Eternal Punishment the reiterated theme of his warnings? From cover to cover, not one single trace can we discover that any such doctrine had ever crossed the mind of Paul. Once, and once only, he *does* speak of the “everlasting destruction”* of the wicked, but, as I have already fully explained, eternal death is not here under discussion.

This omission of St. Paul to notice the doctrine of eternal punishment is, in itself, a fact of great significance; and might, without going further, lead us to suspect that, after all, some error may lurk in that commonly received dogma.

It may, perhaps, be urged that the subject-matter of St. Paul’s Epistles did not lead him to notice this doctrine, and that his silence may thus be explained. The following passages in his writings are quite sufficient as a refutation of this assertion—“Unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”—Rom. ii. 8, 9.

“That as sin hath reigned unto *death*, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto *eternal life* by Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. v. 21.

* 2 Thess. i. 9.

“For the wages of sin is *death*; but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Rom. vi. 23.

“Of the which” (the works of the flesh) “I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things *shall not inherit* the kingdom of God.”—Gal. v. 21.

“He that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap *corruption* (*φθοράν*): but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap *life everlasting*.”—Gal. vi. 8.

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is *destruction*” (*ἀπώλεια*).—Phil. iii. 18, 19.

These passages are sufficient. In each of them the subject-matter would have naturally led the Apostle to make explicit mention of eternal punishment, had he been aware of any such doctrine. His silence, therefore, is not the result of accident.

But, beyond this negative argument derived from the silence of St. Paul, several positive statements may be found in his writings, which militate very strongly with the ordinary view as to the nature of future existence. Of these a striking instance may be found in the eleventh chapter of his first epistle to the Corinthians. Censuring the church for gross irregularities at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the Apostle declares that “he that eateth and drinketh (unworthily), eateth and drinketh a judgment* (*κρίμα*) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many

* The English Version, “eateth and drinketh *damnation* to himself,” is a well-known mis-translation, (confounding *κρίμα* with *κατάκριμα*) which, as Dean Alford remarks, has done infinite mischief.

are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." (verses 29 and 30). No honest interpreter can deny that physical death is here classed with sickness as a temporal punishment for the unworthy reception. But the dogma that death either confers instant and everlasting happiness, or plunges into instant and everlasting misery, is absolutely inconsistent with this view—if the former, death is no punishment,—if the latter, it is inconceivable that the Apostle should have included so tremendous a penalty, in the same clause with a temporary judgment like sickness.

There are certain statements of St. Paul, bearing upon the question in hand, which I have not pressed into the argument, inasmuch as they appear to involve a doctrine, which, as I have already repeatedly stated, I do not hold—that of Universal Restoration. But, although the general tenor of Holy Scripture does not permit us to adopt this scheme, it must be admitted that, *if* we were to apply to these texts, that principle of rigid, literal interpretation, which is so strenuously insisted upon for those few passages which name everlasting fire, the condemnation of Origen would have to be reversed at once, for Universal Restoration would be proved.

Let us examine one or two of these. If we take, in the English version, the epistle to the Romans, we find in the fifth chapter the following words: "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." (verse 19). It would be difficult from this to make out an Universal Restoration. But we turn to the words of Paul himself, and find a very different statement—"ὡσπερ γὰρ διὰ τῆς παρακοῆς τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἁμαρτωλοὶ κατεστάθησαν οἱ πολλοί, οὕτως καὶ

διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί.”—that is to say, “for as by the disobedience of the one man, *the multitude* were made sinners, so also by the obedience of the one shall *the multitude* be made righteous.” No mere indefinite term, “many,” but the almost definite term, οἱ πολλοί—the multitude—is employed by the Apostle, to indicate both those who were involved in the consequences of Adam’s transgression, and those who received the benefit of the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Another passage in the same epistle, which tends in the same direction, will be found in the eighth chapter—“For the creature (ἡ κτίσις) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same, in hope, because *the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” (verses 20, 21).

But the great storehouse of the Universalists is the eleventh chapter.—Olshausen remarks that “the upholders of the absolute predestination of the evil to evil take the ninth chapter apart from the eleventh; the defenders of Universal Restoration take the eleventh without the ninth.” We must be careful to avoid both of these errors. Still, if the question were to decide between the Universal Restorationist and the All-but-

* Alford’s comment upon this verse is, considered from a logical point of view, perfectly outrageous. It is as follows: “In order to make the comparison more strict, the πάντες who have been made sinners are *weakened* to the indefinite οἱ πολλοί, the πολλοί who shall be made righteous are *enlarged* to the indefinite οἱ πολλοί. Thus a common term of quantity is found for both, the one extending to its largest numerical interpretation, the other restricted to its smallest.” In other words, he charges the Apostle with having deliberately employed a grave logical fallacy, in a treatise confessedly argumentative.

universal Damnationist, we could not omit from the argument the words inspired by the Spirit of God. "For God hath concluded them ALL in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon ALL."* The sublime doxology which immediately follows, immensely enhances the difficulty of believing that this mercy designed for ALL, was in most cases, to be in vain.

There is another passage, however, in the same chapter, which, though in no way connected with Universalism, nevertheless, on any fair principle of interpretation, goes far to make out a *possibility* of ultimate restoration for the sinner, even after death; at least it may be fairly urged against the upholders of everlasting damnation for *all* who are not admitted to Paradise at the moment of their decease. Treating of the national fall of the Israelites, the Apostle proceeds,—“I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid.”† It is agreed on all hands, that there is an essential distinction between those who “stumbled,” (*πταίσαντες*) and those who “fell,” (*πεσόντες*). Those who stumbled were the nation; their lapse was not final. Not so with those who fell; they were the unbelieving branches who have been cut off by death.‡ This is clear from verse 22.—“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, (*τοὺς πεσόντας*) severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.” But we must not stop here. What does the next verse tell us? “And

* “*συνέκλεισεν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς τοὺς πάντας εἰς ἀπίθειαν ἵνα τοὺς πάντας ἐλεήσει.*”—xi. 32. As in chapter v. 19, the force of the original is greatly weakened in the English Version.

† *μη ἐπταίσαν ἵνα πέσωσιν*; ver. 11.

‡ See Alford's Commentary *in loc.*

they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again." They, that is, *Those who fell*, may possibly be restored, "for God is able to graff them in." This, I say, is the *plain and literal* signification of the verse; to give it any other meaning, a *twist*, of more or less violence, must be applied. Surely we must admit it to be in the highest degree improbable that, had the Apostle been aware of the doctrine of eternal punishment, as held by nearly all Protestants, he would not have guarded this text, and the others which we have examined, with such explanations as would have precluded such dangerous mistakes. Surely, when the words "these shall go into everlasting punishment," are triumphantly brought forward against us by the theologian, and we are desired, on pain of the crime of falsifying the Word of God, to accept them in their literal meaning, we have just as good a right to produce another portion of that Word, and demand its, equally literal, acceptance. "It pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell: and, having made peace by the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile *all things* unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."*

* Col. i., 19, 20. Alford's comment is as follows: "All creation subsists in Christ: all creation therefore is affected by His act of propitiation: sinful creation is, in the strictest sense, *reconciled*, from being at enmity: sinless creation, ever at a distance from His unapproachable purity, is lifted into nearer participation and higher glorification of Him, and is thus *reconciled*, though not in the strictest, yet in a very intelligible and allowable sense." He does not touch upon the difficulty of these verses in reference to universal restoration, although he admits that the reconciliation is predicated of the whole universe. "Short of this meaning we cannot stop." Bengel's remark on the "things in heaven" is curious—"Certum est, angelos, Dei amicos, fuisse inimicos hominum Deo infensorum."

Enough has now been said to show that St. Paul not only *does not mention* eternal punishment, but that, had he been acquainted with the doctrine, his subject-matter would very frequently have, naturally, indeed necessarily, led him, not only to notice, but to dilate upon it; and, further, that many statements may be produced from his writings, which tend, very strongly indeed, to contradict it.

We may therefore, with great confidence, conclude that *St. Paul was unacquainted with the doctrine of Eternal Punishment.*

Nor does the Apostle John—if we neglect, for the present, the book of Revelation—lend any sanction to this terrible doctrine; and, further, as in the case of St. Paul, we can produce from the epistles of St. John, few and short as they are, two distinct passages which clearly manifest that the nature of his subject-matter was not the cause of his silence. “He that loveth not his brother abideth in *death*. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath *eternal life* abiding in him.”—1 John iii. 14, 15. “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto *death*: I do not say that he shall pray for it.”—v. 16. But, having just indicated these passages, I pass to another consideration.

The texts in the New Testament which refer to eternal punishment, agree in assigning the unknown epoch, which is commonly called the Day of Judgment, for the promulgation of the awful sentence. As to what takes place at the moment of dissolution, they pronounce nothing; and, indeed, with respect to the “intermediate state of existence of the soul,” Scripture

preserves an almost unbroken silence.* But protestant theologians have not respected this reserve. They take upon themselves to pronounce the irrevocable sentence *at the instant of the separation of the soul from the body.* As a fair specimen,—though couched in somewhat quaint language,—of the ordinarily received views on this subject, we may take the following passage from a sermon of bishop Latimer :

“There are but two states, if we be once gone. There is no change. This is the speech of the Scripture—‘*Ubiunque lignum ceciderit, ibi erit, sive in austrum, sive in aquilonem.*’ ‘Wheresoever the tree falleth, either into the south, or into the north, there it shall rest.’ By the falling of the tree is signified the death of man: if he fall into the south he shall be saved, for the south is hot, and betokeneth charity or salvation; if he fall in the north, in the cold of infidelity, he shall be damned. There are but two states, the state of salvation and the state of damnation. There is no repentance after this life, but if he die in the state of damnation, he shall rise in the same: yea, though he have a whole monkery to sing for him, he shall have his final sentence when he dieth.”†

This extract gives, I say, a fair specimen of the views usually held by Protestants, as to the effects produced by death, in all cases, upon the soul; and, further, it has the advantage of containing the entire Scriptural evidence that can be produced in its support.

If asked, Which text in the entire Bible has been

* The only passages which can be adduced in support of any such intermediate state are Luke xvi. 19-31; xxiii. 43; Acts vii. 59; 2 Cor. v. 8; Phl. i. 23; 1 Pet. iii. 19; Rev. vi. 9.

† *Fourth Sermon preached before King Edward VI.*

most extensively perverted, by having built on its assumed, and wholly unsupported testimony, a general theory, which contradicts all analogy, and destroys the conception of God as a Righteous Judge? I should name, without hesitation, Ecclesiastes xi. 3. This unfortunate text is the sole evidence for the final separation of the righteous and the wicked *at the moment of death*. It is true that if we admit their final separation at the day of judgment, *and at the same time, deny any intermediate state of existence for the soul*, the theory is indisputable: death, and the Day of Judgment, become, for each individual, practically coincident. But this is not the doctrine of the Church of England. So far from denying the intermediate state, she explicitly asserts it in her service for the Burial of the Dead. Some proof is, therefore, indispensable that, in the ages which have elapsed, and may still elapse, before the Day of Judgment, the living souls of the departed are incapable of change. Here, then, is the proof, and the whole proof,—“In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be.”—What the meaning of this text really is, is not by any means clear; as will be at once apparent to any one who takes the trouble of reading it along with its context; but, supposing it *does* unambiguously refer to death, we can hardly consent to build a doctrine so important and comprehensive, on the literal interpretation of a single passage in a book which, over and over again, and in terms, at least equally literal, asserts the mortality of the soul.*

As, in this part of the investigation, I am exclusively concerned with *Scriptural* arguments, I do not here

* See Eccl. ii. 16; iii. 18, 19, 20; ix. 4, 5, 6.

touch upon the prodigious difficulty involved in the irrevocable division of all mankind into two classes at death, but proceed to make a few remarks on one of those, rarely occurring, texts which indicate, with more or less distinctness, the separate existence of the human spirit.

In asserting Eccl. xi. 3, as the *only* evidence for irrevocable separation at death, I have no doubt that, by many, the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, will be urged as an objection. For, it is by all admitted that the dreadful scene, depicted in that parable, refers to the intermediate state. But I still adhere to my assertion. I might urge if I chose that "the parables may not be made first sources and seats of doctrine. Doctrines, otherwise and already established, may be illustrated, or indeed further confirmed by them; but it is not allowable to constitute doctrine first by their aid. For, from the literal to the figurative, from the clearer to the more obscure, has been ever recognized as the order of Scripture interpretation—*Theologia parabolica non est argumentativa.*"* This rule is indisputable, but I am ready to wave it. Let us suppose the whole passage, Luke xvi. 19-31, not to be a parable at all, but a historical narrative revealed by Jesus Christ. Still it does not make out an *irrevocable* separation. The great gulf is not *said* to be fixed *for ever*, and we are surely not entitled to add anything to the text. So far as the story goes, the suffering might be temporary only; in fact, such an assumption would fall in much better with Abraham's first answer, which explains the "comfort," and the "torment"

* *Notes on the Parables of our Lord*, by the Archbishop of Dublin, p. 39.

respectively, as compensations, or adjustments of the temporary "evil" and the temporary "good" things of Lazarus and Dives in their earthly life.

But there is a much stronger reason for rejecting this parable as a proof of the irrevocable damnation of the wicked at the moment of death. Short as is the conversation between Abraham and Dives, it yet contains clear—I had almost said unmistakable—evidence, that, even in his infernal dwelling-place, the wretched man had not become hopelessly bad. I cannot conceive how any unprejudiced man,—one who has no preconceived theory, which he is determined, at all hazards, to sustain—can fail to admit, on reading the narrative, that the request of Dives for the mission of Lazarus to warn his brethren, was prompted by unselfish love; that, though himself in the "place of torment," he was still anxious for the happiness of others. Obvious as this, at the first glance, appears to be, it is rendered still plainer by the form in which he reiterates his request: "Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." For, it certainly was not *unnatural* to suppose, although the supposition may have been erroneous, that so signal a miracle as a resurrection from the dead, *might* have been effective in converting his brethren to God.

But the present Archbishop of Dublin takes quite a different view of his motive—"The rich man's request grows out of another root. There lies in it a secret justifying of himself, and accusing of God. What a bitter reproach against God and against the old economy is here involved: 'If only I had been sufficiently warned, if only God had given me sufficiently clear evidence of these things, of the need of repentance, of this place as the goal of a sensual worldly life, I had

never come hither. But though I was not duly warned, let at least my brethren be so.'” And again, on the repetition of the request by Dives, the archbishop remarks—“As it is true of the faithful, that ‘their works do follow them,’ and that their temper here is their temper in heaven, so not less does the contempt of God’s word, which this man showed on earth, follow him beyond the grave; that word, as he deems, cannot suffice to save men; they must have something more to lead them to repentance. We have here re-appearing in hell that ‘Show us a sign, that we may believe’ which was so often on the lips of the Pharisees on earth. They will believe, or at least think they would believe, signs and portents, but they will not believe God’s Word.”*

I cannot help regarding this interpretation as, in the highest degree, forced and unnatural. The archbishop himself, a few lines further on, speaking of our

* *Notes on the Parables*, pp. 473-4. Archer Butler, in his Sermon on Eternal Punishment, admits the benevolent intention of Dives, though he doubts that such “poor relics” of good would long continue with him.—“The voluptuary in the parable retained still some of the better natural elements of humanity. ‘I have five brethren’ was the intercession of no unamiable compassion.”—*Sermons*, Second Series, p. 389. But the most extraordinary view I have met with, as to the bearing of this parable on the future state of the damned, is that taken by Dean Alford. Although holding the most rigidly orthodox opinions on the eternity of future punishment, he appears to consider that in hell their moral condition will be *raised*. He comments on verse 27 as follows: “His eyes are now opened to the truth; and no wonder that his natural sympathies are awakened for his brethren. That a lost spirit should feel and express such sympathy, is not to be wondered at; the misery of such will be very much heightened by the awakened and active state of those higher faculties and feelings which selfishness and the body kept down here.”—[The italics are my own.] Thus *selfishness*, surely a great vice,—according to Ulrich Zuingli, *the Original Sin*,—will be got rid of in hell!

Saviour's resurrection, observes that "it is not to be denied that in Christ's resurrection there was a satisfaction of the longing of man's heart, that one should return from the world beyond the grave, and give assurance of the reality of that world." Might not the existence of such a "longing of man's heart" sufficiently account for the rich man's request? Such an explanation as that to which the archbishop has lent his support, can only be accounted for by that longing to make out a doctrine of everlasting punishment, which has in all ages characterized the genuine theologian.*

* It is with great regret that I find myself here constrained to differ from the archbishop. I regret it, not merely on account of the deference due to his high position in the church, but also because he is an author from whose works I have learned much, and have, I hope and believe, derived much benefit. I was sorry also to meet with the following passage in a sermon, preached by him, when Dean of Westminster, before the University of Cambridge: "There are indeed who see a light breaking even for them whom that day [the day of judgment] shall enfold in its darkness; and far, far off, the faint glimmering of another dawn for them beyond the blackness and darkness which shall encompass them now. I cannot see it in God's Word, but, on the contrary, very much which excludes it; which proclaims that for them who reject the Gospel of his grace, there remaineth, when once their day of grace is ended, no other sacrifice for sin than that which they have wilfully despised and rejected; and to my mind our life would lose much of its solemn earnestness, its awful meaning, if I did not believe that within those brief limits which shut it in on either side, the issues of eternity were being decided, and we making our choice, that choice which must be ours for ever; choosing for God, or choosing against Him; to be ever with Christ, or to be ever separated from Him."—Five Sermons preached before the University of Cambridge, November, 1856. We have seen that,—whether it be true, or whether it be false,—the doctrine of eternal punishment is, beyond all conception, horrible. We should imagine that if, in the abyss of the eternity to come, God, in His wrath remembering mercy, were at some remote epoch to annul the dreadful sentence, the whole creation would celebrate the grace in one united hymn of joy. But the last clause of the archbishop's sermon shows that *he* would look upon the reprieve with no such feelings of exultation. It would mar, in his opinion, the symmetry

We must, therefore, admit that this, the only passage in the Bible which depicts the mind of the wicked in the intermediate state of existence, does not represent its condition as altogether bad; and thus, remembering that eternity is not here asserted of their punishment—we must reject this parable as a proof of final damnation at the moment of death. I repeat it again, the doubtful text, Eccl. xi. 3, is the only Scriptural authority which can be produced for the doctrine.

One of the causes, though by no means the principal cause, of that anxiety to support eternal punishment, which I have just alluded to as a general characteristic of theologians, undoubtedly springs from a strange misapprehension of the Scriptural proofs of immortality, and thus comes before us properly at this stage of the discussion. It is almost uniformly assumed that the immortal life of the righteous, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked, are grounded upon the same Scriptural evidence, and that consequently, if we were to deny the latter, we should be logically constrained along with it to abandon the former—This assumption is based upon the fact that in Matt. xxv. 46, the same word (*αιώνιος*) is employed to express the duration of both life and punishment.

I have no intention of entering into the controversy as to the meaning of this word, which has been translated "eternal" in the English Version of the New Testament. It is sufficient for my present purpose to observe that its signification is recognized by Greek scholars of the highest authority to be extremely obscure; all that I am now endeavouring to make out

of the universe. For the cessation of the eternal torture of millions upon millions of his fellow-creatures would deprive this short life of "much of its solemn earnestness, its awful meaning."

is that, as far as Scripture is concerned, the denial of eternal punishment does not involve the denial of eternal life.

The eternal life of the righteous is not dependent on the texts in which the mysterious word *αἰώνιος* occurs. There are many which expressly assert it, in words of indisputable meaning. It is not surprising that those who are capable of reading the New Testament in a modern language *only*, should have been perplexed by the difficulty under consideration, but it is exceedingly surprising that able and learned men, who have deeply studied the Bible in the original languages, should have brought it forward as an argument in support of eternal punishment.

And yet it is a fact that some able and learned men have done so. Dr. Salmon expressly asserts that an interpretation of the word *αἰώνιος*, different from unending, "makes it *impossible to prove from the Bible* that the happiness of the blessed is eternal."*

I have not the slightest hesitation in asserting, on the other hand, that if every passage in which the word *αἰώνιος* occurs, were struck from the Sacred Book,—and with them the "everlasting fire" for the sinner,—the immortal life of the righteous would shine forth brilliantly from its pages, with lustre all-but undimmed.

* Sermon, before quoted, p. 4. The Archbishop of Canterbury in his Pastoral Letter, dated March 14, 1864, writes as follows:—"Again, I am sure you will beware of giving any other interpretation to the word 'everlasting' in the passages of our formularies which relate to the punishment of the lost, than that of 'eternal' in the sense of 'never-ending.' For whatever be the meaning of the word in these passages in the case of the lost, the same must be its meaning in the case of the saved; and our certainty of never-ending bliss for penitent believers is gone, if the word bears not the same signification in the case of the impenitent and unbelieving."—p. 7. A passage of similar import will be found in the Pastoral Letter of the Archbishop of York, p. 14.

In proof of this assertion, it will be sufficient to produce the following texts:

"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever (πάντοτε)* be with the Lord."—1 Thess. iv. 17.

"For this corruptible must put on incorruption (ἀφθαρσίαν), and this mortal must put on immortality (ἀθανασίαν)."—1 Cor. xv. 53.

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body (σύμμορφον τῷ σώματι τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ), according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."—Phil. iii. 21.

A body which is conformed to the body of His glory is surely immortal. A similar comment is applicable to the following text:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son (προώρισεν συμμόρφους τῆς εἰκόνης τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ)."—Rom. viii. 29.

"Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved (βασιλείαν ἀσάλευτον), let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."—Heb. xii. 28.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible (ἄφθαρτον), and undefiled, and that fadeth not away (ἀμάραντον), reserved in heaven for you, who

* "For πάντοτε, παντες D¹d e. text ABFGJK."—Alford *in loc.* This variation, however, is quite insufficient to shake the authority of the reading πάντοτε.

are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."—1 Pet. i. 3, 4, 5.

"Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him (*ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα*); for we shall see him as he is."—1 John iii. 2.

If we shall be "like Him," we shall possess immortality.

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord (*εἰσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου*)."—Matt. xxv. 21, 23.

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne."—Rev. iii. 21.

These passages, which are not presented as by any means exhausting the subject, are yet amply sufficient to show that we are not dependent on the meaning of the word *αἰώνιος* for our belief in immortal life. In not one of these does the word itself, or any of its cognates, occur. Of the righteous is predicated "incorruptibility" and "immortality;" they shall be "ever" with the Lord; their body shall be "conformed to the Body of Christ's glory;" they shall be made "like God;" their inheritance is "incorruptible;" it "fadeth not away;" their kingdom "cannot be moved;" they "enter into the joy of their Lord." Not a trace of *αἰώνιος* in any of these expressions; and yet we are told that, unless we give a particular interpretation to that particular word, it is "impossible to prove from the Bible that the happiness of the blessed is eternal!" But to describe

the eternity of punishment no such array of unquestioned epithets can be produced. That frightful doctrine is based on the interpretation of a single doubtful term.

But, even admitting the mystical signification of *αἰώνιος* adopted by Mr. Maurice,* the very text which has given so much trouble,—“these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”—proclaims the everlasting life of the merciful, notwithstanding the identity of the terms which are held to express the *duration* both of punishment and of life. For if “eternal life” means “the life of the eternal God,” we can no more conceive its termination than the termination of His Being: the sentence becomes equivalent to “enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” “Eternal” punishment, or “eternal” fire, on the other hand, denoting the eternal wrath of God, ever blazing against sin, would wither into non-existence, the sinner against whom it was directed. Neglecting this passage, however, as a proof of immortality, it has been abundantly shown that all apprehensions of its loss, in consequence of any conceivable interpretation of *αἰώνιος*, may be laid aside at once.

But it may be said,—and the objection is a perfectly fair one,—“Supposing this interpretation of *αἰώνιος* to be correct, is it not a fact that the same expression, which certainly *may* refer to duration, being applied in the same passage both to the life of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, has a natural tendency to excite the notion that the duration of both is identical? This must surely be admitted; and, if so, can we believe that Jesus Christ would have made use of words so liable to mislead His

* See Appendix, Note B.

disciples? Would He not, at least, have been careful to guard them by such explanations, as would have kept His church free from the grave error of ascribing the infliction of endless tortures on His creatures to the All-Merciful God"?

I have said already, and I repeat it now, that certain passages in the New Testament present, to the denier of eternal punishment, formidable difficulties—difficulties too, which we cannot hope wholly to remove. And this is, in my judgment, the most formidable of them. I cannot remove it, but I can show that it is not unique: that it is no peculiarity of our interpretation of *αἰώνιος*. I can produce from our Saviour's teaching a strictly parallel case; a case which no Protestant can refuse to admit as parallel, although the Romanist, indeed, would reject it at once; a case in which Jesus Christ undoubtedly *did* make use of language calculated to lead to grievous and dangerous error; which actually did result in grievous and dangerous error; in error which for centuries filled His whole church, and which, to this day, tarnishes the creed of by far the larger part of it.

Examine by the light of ecclesiastical history these few words, "Take, eat, this is my body." They are written upon its pages in letters of blood and fire. Surely when the Divine Man uttered them, He well knew what the result would be. He knew that multitudes of His faithful servants would perish in the dungeon, on the rack, on the blazing pile, because they received His words in their true, *though not their literal* signification. A word of explanation would have avoided all this sin and misery; but the word was not spoken. If asked, why was it not spoken, we can give no answer. Doubtless, the Saviour

had good reason for choosing His words as He did, though grievous error, and deeply-dyed sin, flowed from their misinterpretation—and, in like manner, I doubt not that,—assuming the words in Matt. xxv. 46, to be a faithful rendering of what He actually said—He had good reasons for making use of such expressions, although their literal interpretation has led the great mass of His church into error which, to my mind, is at least equally grave, and has prevented thousands upon thousands from entering within its pale.

There is another phenomenon which should be steadily kept in mind when we are considering our Lord's denunciations of eternal punishment. It is this:—Jesus Christ in His discourses *habitually* made use of strongly hyperbolic language. Of this unquestionable fact I attempt no explanation, nor have I any occasion to do so. I assert it simply as a fact so patent that no one conversant with the Gospels can call it in question. Even in His moral teaching, if we were uniformly to press the literal interpretation of His words, we should be at once involved in inextricable difficulties. Take only the Sermon on the Mount, and imagine any one taking *all* its precepts in their literal sense. In St. John's Gospel He repeatedly calls the Jews, "Children of the Devil." He tells us that it was His Father's will that He should lose nothing of all which had been given Him, "but should raise it up again at the last day," and yet He admits afterwards that He had lost one of these.* All this should put us on our guard against adopting the literal interpretation of a saying, which, *so interpreted*, asserts a direct moral contradiction.

* John vi. 39 ; xvii. 12.

Bearing in mind this caution, we may now proceed to the examination of the other passage, which presents the only remaining difficulty of a formidable nature.* It is as follows: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, (*γέενναν*) into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."†

On reading this passage we are struck immediately by the highly figurative character of the language. No one would for a moment dream of admitting that a physical defect, or deprivation of a bodily organ in this life, will be perpetuated in the life to come, though some, indeed, have been found who have actually carried out into practice the mutilations here enjoined. It is not impossible, then, that the unquenchable fire and the undying worm *may*, in our Saviour's habitually strong and hyperbolic language, express the complete destruction of the wicked by the eternal

* See note, p. 71.

† Mark ix. 43-48. A parallel passage occurs Matt. xviii. 8, 9, but St. Mark's report is so much fuller that we may confine ourselves to it; that in St. Matthew being only an abridgment. The similar warning in the Sermon on the Mount, (Matt. v. 29, 30,) does not concern us here, as there is in it no assertion of *eternal* punishment.

wrath of God, which burns unquenchably against all manner of sin. It is a striking fact that the sinner is not said to continue living in this unquenchable fire; and yet we are all so familiar with the effects of combustion in utterly decomposing any animal organism, that if it were intended to assert that the sinner's life should *continue* in the furnace of fire, it is surely probable that we should have been distinctly told so.*

But this view, that the passage in question is intended to convey the destruction of the wicked, and not their undying torture, is immensely strengthened by another consideration. Every one who has even a rudimentary acquaintance with the Old Testament is aware how frequently Jehovah is there represented

* Isaac Taylor attempts to get over the physical difficulty as follows:—"And let it be remembered that, although the animal texture, the muscular fibre, the nerve, and the vessels, are presently dissolved, or consumed, by the action of fire, and so the animal anguish quickly reaches its end, yet that we assume far too much if we conclude that the sensitive faculty of the mind is itself liable to any such dissolution. Fire reduces to vapour or to ashes, that which by its nature, may exist indifferently in a solid and organized, or in a gaseous, or a pulverized form. But is the mind susceptible of vaporization, or can it be reduced to powder? We suppose not, and therefore believe it might sustain, undestroyed and undamaged, the utmost intensity of heat; nor is it certain that every species of corporeity must give way, and be dissipated by this element."—*Physical Theory of Another Life*, p. 138. To this strange and fanciful theory we can reply at once, that we are not taught it in the Bible. Whitby conjectures that the fire may be called eternal, "not that the bodies of the wicked shall be for ever burning in it, and never be consumed by it, since this cannot be done without a constant miracle; but because it shall so entirely consume their bodies, as that they never shall subsist again, but shall perish, and be destroyed for ever by it." He holds, however, that their souls survive this destruction of their bodies, and "shall be perpetually subject to the height of misery," being "for ever separated from the presence of the Lord."—*Discourse on the Endless Torments of the Wicked*, appended to his Commentary on 2nd Thessalonians.

under the similitude of a consuming or devouring fire. But, in all cases, those against whom this fire is let loose, are burnt up, devoured, utterly destroyed. No one is able to endure it. A fire goes out from Jehovah and *devours* Nadab and Abihu. (Lev. x. 1, 2.) It *consumes* the two hundred and fifty men who offered incense. (Num. xvi. 35.) The Israelites entreat that they may not see that great fire any more *lest they die*. (Deut. xviii. 16; Ex. xx. 19.) The Fire of God comes down from heaven and *consumes* two captains of fifty with their fifties. (2 Kings i. 10, 12, 14.) There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth *devoured*. (Ps. xviii. 8.) He blows against the wicked in the fire of his wrath, they shall be for fuel, *they shall be no more remembered*. (Ezek. xxi. 31, 32.) A fiery stream issues and comes forth from before him—the beast is slain—his body *destroyed, and given to the burning flame*. (Dan. vii. 10, 11.)

It is needless to multiply these quotations; the fact is undeniable that, in the Old Testament, God is constantly represented as a consuming fire. Now the reason why I refer here so particularly to the Old Testament is, because the description of Gehenna, three times repeated in our Lord's discourse,—“where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched,”—is an obvious quotation from one of its books; it is therefore of especial importance, for the right interpretation of this discourse, to attend to the Old Testament meaning of the fire that never shall be quenched, the eternal fire, the wrath of God. And we have seen that, in the Old Testament, *that* fire is invariably represented as utterly consuming and destroying everything against which it is directed.

And further; when a writer, (as, for example, Mr.

Keble,)* urges the expression *their* worm, and *their* fire, as specifying what *each one* suffers, we should remember that they are Isaiah's words, quoted indeed by Christ, but not altered by Him. If, then, we read the verse of Isaiah's prophecy in which they are found, we obtain another strong confirmation of the view that our Lord is here teaching the destruction of the sinner,—just as in another passage, he warns us to “fear Him which is able to *destroy* (*ἀπολέσαι*) both soul and body in hell.”† For, we find that the *carcasses*, and not the *living bodies*, of the men who had transgressed, are represented by the prophet as the prey of the unquenched fire and the undying worm, thus clearly evincing that the passage is altogether metaphorical, signifying, in striking language, the utter ruin which awaits all the enemies of God. “And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”‡ The prophet is here referring to the exposure of the dead bodies of malefactors in the valley of Hinnom, which lay very near to Jerusalem on the south east. “It was the place where the idolatrous Jews celebrated that horrible rite of making their children pass through the fire, that is, of burning them in sacrifice to Moloch. To put a stop to this abominable practice, Josiah defiled, or desecrated, the place, by filling it with human

* See Note, p. 70.

† Matt. x. 28.

‡ Isaiah lxvi. 24. Two passages, somewhat similar, are found in the Apocryphal books—“The vengeance of the ungodly is fire and worms.”—Eccelus. vii. 17.—“Woe to the nations that rise up against my kindred: the Lord Almighty will take vengeance on them in the day of judgment, in putting fire and worms in their flesh.”—Judith xvi. 17. The rejection of Judith from the canon is a great loss to the advocates of eternal punishment, for the next clause is truly one after their own hearts,—*καὶ κλύουσται ἐν αἰσθήσει ἕως αἰῶνος.*

bones: (2 Kings xxiii. 10, 14,) and probably it was the custom afterwards to throw out the carcasses of animals there; and it became the common burying-place for the poorer people of Jerusalem.* Our Saviour's use of the word Gehenna,—which, in Hebrew, means the valley of Hinnom,—shows that the same imagery was in His mind also. "He expressed the place of torment under the image of Gehenna; and the punishment of the wicked by the worm which there preyed on the carcasses, and the fire which consumed the wretched victims." But both Isaiah, speaking of the dead bodies, and Jesus, speaking of the living sinner, make use of the same expressions, and these have been interpreted to indicate eternal suffering.†

It appears, then, from the above examination of this difficult passage (Mark ix. 43—48), that, in order to arrive at its true meaning, we should bear in mind the following facts:

1. The habitual language of Jesus was strongly metaphorical.
2. In the passage before us he, three times, quotes an Old Testament prophecy.
3. In the Old Testament, 'a consuming fire' and similar expressions, are all-but invariably employed as descriptive of the *destructive* wrath of God.
4. The particular prophecy quoted represents the undying worm and the unquenched fire, as preying on the *dead bodies* of the slain.

I have said already that this is one of the very few passages which the denier of eternal punishment

* Bishop Lowth on Isaiah lxvi.

† It should be remembered that in Matt. v. 22, our Saviour directly refers to the punishment in the valley of Hinnom, and applies to it the name *γέεννα του πυρός*.

cannot hope to explain in a wholly satisfactory manner. The above considerations *lighten*, but, I freely admit, do not *remove* the difficulty. The literal meaning of the passage teaches eternal punishment. True: but what is the *literal* meaning of "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled"?* What is the *literal* meaning of "And so all Israel shall be saved"?† Both of these texts,—and there are many which, literally interpreted, involve equal difficulty,—must be understood in a sense remote from their verbal and grammatical signification; and so must the passage we have been discussing. For the doctrine of *Eternal* Punishment, as distinguished both from Future Punishment and from Eternal Death, is, with many, the point on which their acceptance or rejection of the Bible turns. Let those who are satisfied with that doctrine, adhere, by all means, to the verbal interpretation of their half-dozen texts. But to us who hold that it is one which exterminates the morality of the Supreme Being, its establishment would act instantly as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the books or creeds which put it forward. We find accordingly that the scriptural evidence for Eternal Punishment, as distinguished from the two other doctrines, is weak and scanty, and more, far more, than counter-balanced by numerous other texts, of fully equal authority, which would teach a wholly different creed. This is an ample justification for rejecting the literal meaning as soon as we find that another interpretation is *possible*; and, that another interpretation *is* possible, has been fully shown.

The few remaining texts which bear upon the question

* Matt. xxiv. 34.

† Rom. xi. 26.

need not detain us long. Another of the twelve from Mr. Keble's list, which I have admitted into the controversy,* will be also found in Isaiah—"The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites: Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"†—The apparent argument for eternal punishment contained in this verse, is easily disposed of. The last clause is inaccurately translated. Bishop Lowth renders it as follows:—

"The sinners in Zion are struck with dread;
Terror hath seized the hypocrites:
Who among us can abide this consuming fire?
Who among us can abide these continued burnings?"

Thus understood, the passage only presents us an additional instance of what we have already repeatedly seen. The wrath of God is represented as a consuming fire, burning unquenchably, which no one *can* face and live.

And in precisely the same manner is the unquenchable fire in Luke iii. 17, to be explained—"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his

* See Note, p. 66.

† Isaiah xxxiii. 14.—Rosenmüller translates it:—"Timent in Sione peccatores, tremor corripit impios. Ecquis, iniquiunt, comoretur apud ignem consumentem? quis nostrum habitet apud focum æternum?" He comments as follows:—"Varie hujus commatis sensum constituunt, aliis per *ignem consumentem* *focosque æternos* Assyriorum exercitum ad Hierosolyma appropinquantem, aliis stragem quam Jehova in illo edidit, intelligentibus... Sed quum proxime antea, ut sæpe alias *ignis consumens* sit symbolum pœnæ a Jehova inmissæ in Assyrios, sententiam posteriorem præferre tutius erit. Hinc sensus erit: ipsi impii in Jehovam, quum animadvertentur terribilem illam poenam, quam Deus, adhuc ab ipsis neglectus, ab Assyriis sumsit, numen illud tam severe puniens timere coeperunt, anxieque quæsierunt, quomodo hujus numinis vindictam evadere quis possit?"

floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable."*

This is another of the twelve texts; six still remain, but they may be shortly disposed of. For they all belong to books of the New Testament, (2 Peter, Jude, and Revelation), of which the canonical authority was long held to be doubtful. To discuss the causes of this doubtfulness would be here out of place; but the fact of its long existence is quite sufficient to justify us in refusing to allow much weight to passages contained in these books, towards the establishment of a dogma, itself of such terrific nature, and involving consequences so hideous, as the eternity of future punishment.

As for the three passages in the Second Epistle of S. Peter and the Epistle of S. Jude, I have counted them among the texts which apparently teach that doctrine, *only* because the words "for ever," and "eternal" occur in them in reference to punishment; but, as I have already remarked, the expressions "the mist of darkness," (2 Pet. ii. 17), and "the blackness of darkness," (Jude 13) much more naturally indicate eternal *death*; while the "eternal fire" (Jude 7) of Sodom and Gomorrhah and the cities of the plain, is clearly metaphorical, and signifies, as before, the out-pouring of the Divine wrath.†

* With this verse the following passage from an Old Testament prophecy may be compared: "Say to the forest of the south, Hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will kindle a fire in thee, and it shall devour every green tree in thee, and every dry tree: the flaming flame shall not be quenched, and all faces from the south to the north shall be burnt therein. And all flesh shall see that I the Lord have kindled it: it shall not be quenched."—Ezekiel, xx. 47, 48.

† It may be remarked that the only place in the New Testament where the true Greek word for eternal, *αἰδιος*, occurs in reference to punishment, is in the preceding verse of this epistle—"and the

As for the book of Revelation, we have not only its late reception into the canon, but the absolute impracticability of its interpretation, to contend with. Except believers in Dr. Cumming, no one alive knows what the Beast, whose worshippers are tormented in fire and brimstone, really means. His number is the number of a man, but "he that hath understanding" has not yet arisen to give us the interpretation thereof. Few sensible men believe that the stupid conundrums which have been suggested, point to its true meaning; and yet this misty book is the grand stronghold of the defenders of eternal punishment; although, even in the book itself, one verse unmistakably shows the *unreal* meaning of the "lake of fire," inasmuch as two clearly unreal personages are represented as thrown into it—"And death and hell (Hades) were cast into the lake of fire," (xx. 14)—a verse which, if like our opponents we ventured to "interpret" this mysterious book, might be held to indicate the complete and final victory of good,—the last enemy being destroyed for ever.* At all

angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains, (*δεσμοῖς αἰδίοις*), under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day."—Jude 6.

* "These words certainly convey to me an impression of a victory over all moral evil, over all which is contrary to the nature of God, that I should be very sorry to lose."—Mr. Maurice's *Letter to Dr. Jelf, on the word "Eternal," and the Punishment of the Wicked*, p. 20. The mode which this interpretation suggests, of bringing about this inevitable victory, is surely preferable to the following explanation by a German theologian, which Mr. Mansel quotes with evident complacency: "Es scheint undenkbar, dass die Weltentwicklung mit einem *unaufgelösten Zwiespalt* abschliesse, dass der Gegensatz gegen den göttlichen Willen in dem Willen irgend welches Geschöpfes sich behauptete. Diesen Knoten löst indessen zunächst schon ein richtiger Begriff der *Strafe*. Der Gegensatz gegen den göttlichen Willen behauptet sich eben nicht, sondern ist ein schlechterdings überwundener, wenn der ganze Zustand der Wesen, in

events it clearly shows that being "cast into the lake of fire" means, in some cases at least, absolute destruction, inasmuch as the conception of the endless torment of two personified abstractions, such as Death and Hades, is a childish absurdity.

It is strange that in Mr. Keble's enumeration of the texts which are held to teach eternal punishment, the memorable denunciation of the sin against the Holy Ghost, recorded by all three of the synoptical evangelists, should find no place;* for it is surely much stronger than a great many of those on his list. Considered as an argument for eternal *punishment*, I may pass it by at once, inasmuch as the only inference from it, in any way bearing upon the question, would be eternal *death*. But in another point of view, not irrelevant to the discussion, these texts are of the very highest importance.

What the real meaning of this unpardonable sin may be, is a question which has greatly exercised theologians in all ages. The indefinite description of it as "the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost," undoubtedly leaves much room for speculation as to the precise mode in which its guilt may be incurred. But, in a general way, it is not difficult to make out

denen er ist, Strafbestand ist, so dass das gebundene Böse den reinen Einklang der zum göttlichen Reiche verklärten Welt durchaus nicht mehr zu stören vermag."—Müller, *Christliche Lehre von der Sünde*, II. p. 599, quoted by Mansel, *Notes to Bampton Lectures*, p. 407. The meaning of this horrible passage I take to be, that when the condition of every sinner has once become finally, hopelessly, and universally bad—when every thought and emotion of the mind communicate unmixed torture—when each pore of the body drinks in agony the acutest, never to end, never to abate—when, in short, "*der ganze Zustand der Wesen Strafbestand ist*,"—then indeed the victory is won, the harmony of the transfigured universe is disturbed no more!

* Matt. xii. 31, 32; Mark iii. 29, 30; Luke xii. 10.

what our Lord intended by this expression. The scribes had just attributed an act of the Spirit of God (Matt. xii. 28), to the prince of the devils. They had confounded the two spirits. They were in danger of an "eternal sin."*

Demoniac possession, as an open manifestation, exists no more; but is there no way in which, even now, we might incur the guilt of such confusion? There plainly is. If ever we ascribe to Almighty God an act which our conscience, plainly and deliberately, tells us is wrong, we, so far as in us lies, ascribe an act of Satan to the Holy Spirit. We confound the Lord and Giver of Life with Beelzebub.

Now we all know that, as for sin in general, its intensity varies with the nature and capacity of the individual by whom it is committed. We pass very different moral judgments on the same material act, according as the agent is a child, a savage, an ignorant peasant, an educated man. And we have no reason for doubting that the same rule holds in the case of the Sin which is unpardonable; so that, *to one man*, an act may be incapable of forgiveness, which to another is not fatal.

If, then, any one who reads these pages finds that he has arrived at the conclusion that the doctrine of eternal punishment, as distinguished from eternal death, is unequivocally condemned by his conscience, as being repugnant to the nature of an All-Just and All-Merciful God, the denunciation of the unpardonable sin becomes, *for him*, at once invested with *special* importance.

* We owe to the critical editors of the New Testament the recovery of the true reading in Mark iii. 29. Instead of "but is in danger of eternal damnation," we must substitute, "but is in danger of eternal sin."—*ἀλλὰ ἐνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἀμαρτήματος*. See Appendix, note B.

Others may, through thoughtlessness, or perhaps in a few cases, through peculiarity of the moral faculty, continue to hold this doctrine without imperilling their immortal souls. But you, O reader, may thereby forfeit the Life Eternal. Once conscience has decidedly pronounced against an alleged act of God, the danger of ascribing it to Him becomes frightful—In your inmost heart you hold it to be the work of a bad being.* Beware then lest, in attributing to your Creator, an act which the conscience *He gave you* pronounces an atrocious moral crime, you incur that guilt which no sacrifice can expiate, and of which there is no forgiveness either in this world or the world to come.

Enough has been said to make it manifest that Holy Scripture is not committed to the terrible doctrine of eternal punishment. The normal expression of the Sacred Volume to denote the futurity of the wicked, is "death," not "life in torture." If we chose to make an induction, we could, I doubt not, produce at least ten unambiguous denunciations of death, for one expression which could, by any art, be twisted to support eternal suffering. We have seen, further, that those very few texts which do primarily assert the latter, *admit of* another meaning. So that to represent the testimony of the Bible as being clearly and decisively in favor of Eternal Punishment, is simply to misrepresent the facts of the case. *If* the state of the wicked, after the final Judgment, is fixed for ever, it is, so far as the overwhelming mass of Scriptural evidence is concerned, the state of Death.

* It is strange that Calvin, when treating of Predestination, should have felt no qualms of conscience in attributing to his Maker what he himself admitted to be a horrible decree—"Horribilis decretum fateor."

CHAPTER V.

ON THE SCRIPTURAL EVIDENCE FOR FINITE
PUNISHMENTS IN ANOTHER LIFE.

BUT is this doom of eternal death for the sinner *universal*? Does it extend to *all* who depart this life unreconciled to God through Christ? This is the next question for consideration—the question of Future Punishment *not eternal*.

On all points relating to the state of things after death, “the accounts given by the Sacred Writers, though very distinct and positive in declaring the *certainty* of future rewards and punishments, are yet extremely brief, uncircumstantial, and unsatisfactory to curiosity.” For this well-known fact good reasons may be assigned; additional information is not practically necessary; it would most probably be incomprehensible by us, restricted as we are to our present bodily and mental faculties; and its absence furnishes a strong confirmation of the truth of Christianity—“since no impostor *would*, and no enthusiast *could*, have written in such a style on such a subject, but would have been sure to enlarge on all the particulars of a future life.”* And this information, scanty as it is in reference to the condition of the redeemed in another world, is by many degrees more scanty with respect to that of the lost. Hence, along with

* See Whately's *View of the Scripture Revelations concerning a Future State*. Lect. viii.

much good, a serious evil has originated; so little has been revealed on the absorbingly interesting question of a future life, that what little *is* found in the Bible has been subjected to an improper critical treatment. In the most unmistakeably allegorical discourses each separate sentence has been pressed to its literal and grammatical meaning, and the result is a conventional view of the future life of the Christian, which, I am persuaded, will not bear examination, either at the bar of Scripture, or of Reason.

For example: the allegorical description of the Last Judgment, contained in Matt. xxv. 31—46, is almost universally regarded as a proof that the totality of the descendants of Adam shall then be irrevocably divided into two, and *only two* classes—the sheep and the goats—those on the right hand and those on the left. As a fair specimen of the conventional view on this subject, we may take the following passage from a sermon by the present Archbishop of Dublin, to which I have already referred:*

“There are *many* companies now, grouped according to the transient laws and necessities of this present time; there shall be *only two* companies then. In one shall be all the excellent of the earth, all that have kept the faith, that have overcome the world, that have made their garments white betimes in the blood of the Lamb; saints and martyrs that stand forth to us as the pillar fires of that Heavenly City toward which we travel; and with these thousands and ten thousands of whom the world keeps no memory, whose names, not written here, shall yet be found written in heaven in the Lamb's book of life. Nor those only of other times, unknown

* See above, p. 86.

to us in the flesh, or heard of only by the hearing of the ear; but some also for whom we ourselves have thanked God that such have been, and that our lives were blended with theirs; being, as they are to us, the pledge of an eternal life beyond the grave worth all the arguments of the schools, for we are sure that such love, such goodness could never have been kindled in human souls, again after a little moment to be extinguished for ever. To these the King shall say, 'Come; you loved, weakly and imperfectly, yet still you loved Him who had first loved you, and now the kingdom of love opens its arms to receive you.'

"But that other company, the dregs and dross of the world, the refuse and offscouring, all the darkness, the pride, the falsehood, the selfishness, the lust, the cruelty, the hate, all which, isolated and scattered, shows so hideous now, all this gathered into one, unchecked by the presence of any good, fiercer and stronger because then finding no vent, but all turned in upon itself, who can dare to dwell even in thought upon this? They shall be judged already; the being what they are shall be itself their judgment; which judgment shall yet embody itself outwardly in that 'Depart from me' of the King."

This is the popular view of the Judgment. But the question naturally arises—What is to become of the enormous multitude who are neither "the excellent of the earth," nor yet "the dregs and dross of the world"? Between the former and the latter class,—both of which added together form but an infinitesimal fraction of the whole,—we find every gradation in the moral scale. There is no break *per saltum*. As in animal life, power, intellect, so in goodness, faith, purity, the progression from the lowest to the highest type

is such that no line of demarcation can be traced between the successive stages. Nor does this hold merely during the earthly life; the great change of death comes alike to every grade of development. We cannot deny this. This two-fold division of the human race at death contradicts at least all analogy; it also contradicts all our notions of Justice; let us see whether it does not contradict the Bible also.

Few would be bold enough to deny that the final judgment is represented in Scripture as a *just* judgment. "We are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things." He "will render to every man according to his deeds." "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." "Every man's work shall be made manifest, for the day shall declare it." "I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."* The testimony of Scripture and the decisions of our conscience are here in absolute unison. The Judge of all the earth shall do right.

Let us imagine, then, the whole great multitude of Adam's descendants arranged on that awful day according to the degrees of moral elevation or degradation in which they were arrested by the numbing grasp of Death; beginning with the blackest ruffian who has ever disgraced humanity, and ending with the saint who has attained more closely than any of his fellow-creatures to the standard of angelic excellence. The long line is absolutely continuous; from lowest to highest no break appears. Is it possible to imagine that the sentence of the Infinitely Just will consist in cutting the rank, at some point or other, into two

* See Rom. ii. 2, 6; xiv. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 13; Matt. xii. 36.

sections,—placing an impassable gulf between them,—turning those on the left hand into hell-fire, those on the right into the kingdom of heaven, each for all eternity? What are we to think of the two men who on each side stood nearest to the dividing line? *Summum jus, summa injuria*, we should surely exclaim. And yet the belief in this irreversible *two-fold* division is all but universal; all the popular conceptions of ‘Heaven’ and ‘Hell’ involve this glaring absurdity.*

Next to the dogma of eternal punishment, this narrow view as to the absolute uniformity of God’s dealings with the Blessed, and the equally absolute uniformity of His dealings with the Cursed, is the most objectionable article of the popular creed, which bears upon future existence. And here again we have a specimen of the danger of forcing a literal interpretation upon an allegorical discourse:—because the same reward is *here* conferred upon those on the right hand, the same sentence passed on those on the left hand, it is assumed, in flat contradiction to both Reason and Scripture, that no variety will be found in the many mansions of the Father’s house, no degrees of punishment in the dreary abode of the lost,—completely overlooking the obvious truth that an allegorical description can

* It might at first sight appear that this terrible difficulty is completely removed by the Romish doctrine of Purgatory. But a moment’s reflection is sufficient to show that this is not the case; the difficulty is *shifted*, but neither removed nor extenuated. Its place in the Romish system is found at the division between the *worst* who is admitted to Purgatory, and the *least bad* who is consigned to everlasting hell. For, no matter how long and intense we conceive the pains of purgatory to be, the difference of the punishment of these two men, whose guilt differed but by a shade, is still infinite. The church of Rome, therefore, transposes the difficulty to the dividing line between purgatory and hell, but does not diminish it, even in the slightest degree.

only illustrate the notion symbolized, *from one particular point of view.*

This doctrine annihilates the eminently practical belief in a future judgment. For, the scene which each man calls up in his imagination as representative of the Judgment Day, conforms with the conception of judgment in name only. It is quite true that orthodox preachers do not explicitly deny a *retribution*. They hold that in the next world there will be diversities of rewards and punishments. But they relegate this doctrine to the back ground, and they do so necessarily. For, it is absolutely inconsistent with the received views of eternity. *Every* reward is eternal, *every* punishment is eternal. This at once paralyzes us. We see immediately that a *slight eternal punishment* is a contradiction in terms. And yet Jesus Christ Himself, in as clear language as is possible to use, teaches the doctrine that *some* future punishments will be slight. "He that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes." He does not say "comparatively few,"—he says "few". (*δαρήσεται ὀλίγας.*)* What does He mean? Must we have recourse to the hideous reveries of Dante, and imagine the damned immersed—some to the neck, some to the waist, some only to the ankles, in the lake of boiling pitch; but there to abide for ever? Is it not clear, on the other hand, that a punishment, so described, must one day cease?

But this is far from being the only passage in the teaching of our Lord which decidedly points this way. We have seen already how the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus represents some lingering traits of goodness surviving in the place of torment. This

* Luke xii. 48.

point has been fully discussed already; but how are we to understand the concluding words of the denunciation of the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, as reported by St. Matthew—"It shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come"?*

It is curious to observe the agonies of the defenders of irreversible damnation at death in the presence of these words, which surely *seem* to indicate that, although the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is irremissible, *some* sins might be forgiven in the world to come. For example; Dean Alford, having quoted St. Augustine's comment,—"*Neque enim de quibusdam veraciter diceretur, quod non eis remittatur neque in hoc sæculo neque in futuro, nisi essent quibus, etsi non in isto, tamen remittatur in futuro,*"—proceeds to remark—"In the almost entire silence of Scripture on any such doctrine, every principle of sound interpretation requires that we should hesitate to support it by two difficult passages, in neither of which does the plain construction of the words absolutely require it."

The other difficult passage here referred to,—difficult only to the conventional interpreter,—is the following: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water."† "Difficult" we may call this passage, if, by difficult, we mean that it is

* Matt. xii. 32.

† 1 Pet. iii. 18—20.

hard to reconcile it with certain views which are commonly called orthodox; but its difficulty certainly does not lie in obscurity of signification. *That* is plain and obvious. It tells us distinctly that the Saviour preached to the departed souls of those who had been cut off in their sins by the most tremendous of all the temporal judgments of the Almighty.

This is, no doubt, a staggering text for all who teach the absolute impossibility of the forgiveness of sin in the next world; and accordingly it has been subjected to the most unscrupulous treatment. Libraries have been written upon it. To any who consider that the interpretations, above given, of the two main passages bearing upon eternal punishment,* are forced and unnatural, I commend for their study the attempts of those numerous commentators who, "offended by the idea of the possibility of salvation being opened to spirits of the disobedient kept awaiting judgment," have undertaken the difficult task of evading its plain meaning. An excellent resumé of their conflicting interpretations will be found in the fourth volume of Alford's Greek Testament. (Part I.) Upon the passage itself, Dean Alford makes the following remarks, conceived in a very different spirit from that which apparently prompted his comment, quoted above, on Matt. xii. 32:—

"With the great majority of commentators, ancient and modern, I understand these words to say, that our Lord, in His disembodied state, did go to the place of detention of departed spirits, and did there announce His work of redemption, preach salvation in fact, to the disembodied spirits of those who refused

* Matt. xxv. 31—46. Mark ix. 43—48.

to obey the voice of God when the judgment of the flood was hanging over them. Why these rather than others are mentioned,—whether merely as a sample of the like gracious work on others, or for some special reason unimaginable by us, we cannot say. It is ours to deal with the plain words of Scripture, and to accept its revelations as far as vouchsafed to us. And they are vouchsafed to us to the utmost limit of legitimate inference from revealed facts. That inference every intelligent reader will draw from the fact here announced: it is not purgatory, it is not universal restitution; but it is one which throws blessed light on one of the darkest enigmas of the divine justice: the cases where the final doom seems infinitely out of proportion to the lapse which has incurred it.* And as we cannot say to what other cases this *κήρυγμα* may have applied, so it would be presumption in us to limit its occurrence or its efficacy. The reason of mentioning here these sinners, above other sinners, appears to be, their connexion with the type of baptism which follows. If so, who shall say, that the blessed act was confined to them."

To these excellent remarks no addition is required; I pass at once to another argument.

It is on all hands admitted that temporal death is sometimes represented in Scripture as a *temporal* punishment for sin. The text "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep,"† has been already noticed in disproof of *eternal* punishment. But it is equally decisive in proof of *finite* punishments in the next world. The flood, also, was

* Does not this infinity of disproportion extend to *every* case in which infinite punishment is inflicted for finite sin?

† 1 Cor. xi. 30.

a great temporal judgment, and some learned divines have held that many who died in it, may yet have been saved from final damnation; it follows not that all who perished there are to perish everlastingly in the lake of fire.* And, it being thus generally admitted, that death is sometimes a temporal punishment, it is certainly strange how few seem to be aware that the admission is absolutely destructive of the popular notion that the separation of the spirit from the body is an instantaneous translation of the former to eternal and irreversible happiness or misery. It matters not what view we take of the intermediate state, as a state of consciousness or of sleep. If the former, the change is, so far from a punishment, a blessing; if the latter, the moment of death and the Judgment Day are, to the deceased, identical. On *neither* supposition could death be *any* punishment to the saved. It is either eternal punishment or no punishment at all. If, therefore, temporal death is ever represented in the Bible as a temporal punishment, the passages containing such representations form a decisive proof that *some* future punishments shall be of finite duration.

With respect, then, to the question concerning finite punishments in the future life, we may hold that the following propositions have been established:—

I. The Scriptures preserve a mysterious silence on the subject of future existence.

II. The few passages which bear upon it have been strained in the popular interpretation.

III. In this world the good and the bad are not divided *per saltum*;

IV. And therefore, the *two-fold* irrevocable division

* See Harold Browne's *Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles*, p. 96.

of the human race at the last day contradicts our notions of justice.

V. Such a division annihilates the doctrine of a final judgment ;

VI. And therefore, contradicts the Bible.

VII. Jesus Christ expressly teaches that some future punishments are *slight*.

VIII. He represents the moral state of the damned as not wholly bad.

IX. He alludes to the possibility of forgiveness of sin in the world to come.

X. He preached to the departed spirits of some who had died in sin.

XI. Death, considered as a temporal punishment, is absolutely inconsistent with the conventional view.

XII. Death *is* represented in the Bible as, in certain cases, a temporal punishment.

Punishment after death, finite in duration, as the lot of *some*, is therefore, the unambiguous doctrine of Holy Scripture ; and further, that in the case of *some*, such punishment may be followed by restoration, is a fair inference from more than one passage. But as to the nature and *modus operandi* of such inflictions, nothing whatever has been revealed.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE CAUSES WHICH HAVE LED TO THE
PREVALENCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISH-
MENT, AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH IN THE
CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

IF, therefore, it be admitted that the Scriptural evidence for the eternity of future punishment is both weak and scanty, and far more than counter-balanced by numerous passages which are absolutely irreconcilable with it; while the moral objections are of such intensity that it may be maintained that *no amount of evidence* would render the dogma credible; how are we to account for the indisputable fact that, almost from the earliest ages, this tremendous doctrine has been taught by the great majority of the Christian Church?* I think that, without any reference to Scriptural statements, it is not difficult to assign satisfactory reasons both for the origin and the continuance of so terrible an article of faith.

We must remember the condition in which the little body of Christians found themselves placed during the first and second centuries of our era. Not only were they in particular, continually exposed to ferocious persecutions, but the age in which they lived was characterized by an unchecked display of inhumanity and barbarity in their most atrocious forms.

* For the opinions of the Apostolical Fathers on this question of eternal punishment, see Appendix, Note C.

This inhumanity, though lessened by the doctrines of the Gospel, was certainly very far from being wholly extinguished in the hearts of the Christian converts. We cannot, therefore, be surprised that their feelings towards the brutal persecutors by whom they were trodden down, were of an extremely bitter cast; and that these same feelings should have deeply tinged their views as to the condition of their oppressors in the world to come.

Such emotions appear to have worked with peculiar intensity, when any of the brethren were spectators of the cruel martyrdom of some revered father and teacher. The martyrs themselves in most cases followed the illustrious example of their predecessor St. Stephen, and, amid their own torments, prayed even for their enemies. But in the brethren who stood round, and watched the dying agonies of their friend, the dreadful spectacle produced a very different frame of mind. Horror, disgust, and burning hatred of the murderers, naturally took possession of their breasts; and, as by the possession of temporal power, the persecutors were exempted from all punishment in this world, the outraged Christians joyfully dilated upon, and exaggerated, the torments which awaited them beyond the grave.

To the existence of a tendency in the early church, to expatiate upon the torments of the damned, with what we now justly regard as savage exultation, many well-known passages in the writings of the early fathers bear unequivocal testimony. We find one terrible instance of this unchristian disposition in the encyclical epistle of the church of Smyrna, relating the history of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp. It appears that Polycarp having concealed himself, the officers who were sent to arrest him succeeded in finding two little

slaves (*παιδάρια*) who knew his place of refuge. One of these children, being put to the torture, (*βασανιζόμενον*), in his agony disclosed it to the authorities; and, in consequence of this information, the hunted bishop was speedily apprehended. Whereupon the holy Church of Smyrna invokes the doom of Judas Iscariot on the unfortunate children!* Such an atrocious sentiment as this excites in us now, feelings both of disgust and indignation, but allowance must be made not only for the peculiar circumstances in which the Christian church, at that awful time, was placed, but also for the low general standard of morality which characterized the age. It is easy to see, however, that in such a widely spread state of feeling in the church, one or two texts *prima facie* inculcating eternal punishment, would be eagerly seized upon, and unduly pressed forward in support of such doctrine.

But further; the doctrine of eternal punishment having thus originated as an article of faith, its perpetuation was rendered all but certain, by the establishment of the ecclesiastical system. All know how early the overbearing spirit of ecclesiastics manifested itself in the church; and with what eagerness, in spite of their Master's command, they grasped at temporal power. That, in a barbarous or semi-barbarous age, tremendous weight was given to ecclesiastical censures by such a doctrine as that of eternal punishment, requires no proof. No wonder at the vigorous "Anathema to Origen, together with his nefarious, execrable, and abominable doctrine; and to every one who believes it, or in any manner presumes at all to defend it at

* οἱ δὲ προδόντες αὐτὸν τὴν αὐτοῦ τοῦ Ἰούδα ὑποσχέσθαι τιμωρίαν.—
Martyrium S. Polycarpi, cap. vi.

any time; in Christ Jesus, our Lord, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

The early Christian practice of using prayers for the dead, was gradually developed into the Romish doctrine of Purgatory, and its inevitable supplement, the belief that the prayers and sacrifices of the church militant are effectual in procuring partial relief, and accelerated deliverance, for the souls therein detained. The combination of these doctrines with that of eternal punishment, at length elevated the church to a temporal sovereignty, which at one time threatened to absorb all rule and authority and power under her own corrupted sway. But, shocking as were the abuses connected with the purgatory of Rome, we may well doubt whether the Reformers took the right way to correct them—whether in the natural, but violent, reaction against the atrocities of Tetzal, which speedily followed the affixing of the theses of Luther to the church-door of Wittenberg—they did not rush into an opposite extreme of at least equal danger, in consigning every one, without exception, to eternal hell or heaven at the moment of dissolution.

Many learned dissertations have been written on the causes why the Reformation has not made greater progress in Europe. The views of the leading Reformers, with respect to the abuses of the church of Rome, appear to us, in the main, so conformable both to reason and Scripture, that we should naturally have anticipated the speedy expansion of the new faith throughout the world, and the eradication, before many years elapsed, of every other less perfect form of Christianity. But, so far from this having been the case, it is well known that the geographical limits of the Reformation in Europe have scarcely altered during the

last three centuries. I have little doubt that this narrow view—irreconcilable alike with Holy Scripture, reason, and tradition—that, in all cases, an irrevocable two-fold division takes place at the instant of death, has been the principal check to which the arrest of its development must be ascribed. As for myself, though feeling no sympathy whatever with either the peculiar doctrines or practices of the church of Rome, I must admit that if I were obliged to choose between belief in the Romish purgatory, and belief in that extraordinary dogma,—which, in the face of the Bible, annihilates a future judgment, by turning every one, on leaving this world, irrevocably, for all eternity, into hell or heaven,—I should have no hesitation in choosing the former, as by far the less of two grave errors. But fortunately we are not restrained to either of these alternatives.

The main cause of the tenacity with which modern theologians cling to the doctrine of eternal punishment is to be found, I am persuaded, in their conviction that this terrific dogma is absolutely necessary as a sanction for morality.* They hold that its abolition would be at once a signal for mad riot and unrestrained indulgence in every form of sin. Their views appear to be of this kind—“We see that, in spite of the terrible doctrine of torments which shall never cease, being the inevitable doom of the impenitent sinner, vice is yet rampant throughout the world. And surely the state of things would be ten-fold worse, were so formidable a barrier once removed. As soon as the sinner is taught

* The apprehension that the denial of eternal punishment would have the effect of casting grave doubts upon the Scriptural evidence for eternal life, is another cause which has contributed, not a little, to this general support. But I need not notice it here, as it has been fully discussed in the fourth chapter; where it is shown to be without even a shadow of foundation.

that everlasting torture is a myth, impunity is added as an incentive to vicious indulgence of every kind, and his sin will be at once redoubled." This is their mode of reasoning. We may take the following extract from a well-known religious periodical, as a sample of the ordinary views on this subject. Criticising certain works in which the eternity of future punishment was denied, the writer remarks as follows:—

"We can hardly dwell upon the effects of any general spread of such a doctrine, even in simple thought, without alarm. The release from the notion of eternal punishment would be felt by the great mass, as a relief from the sense of moral obligation, and, relying on the certainty that all would be sure to be right at last, men would run the risk of the intermediate punishment, whatever it might be, and plunge into self-indulgence without hesitation. It may be said, that men do this now under the belief of eternal punishment: they do—and there is no limit to the powers of imagination by which men can suppress the reasonable certainty of the future, and make the present everything. But the belief in eternal punishment is the true and rational concomitant of the sense of moral obligation. Destroy the punishment, and you destroy the sin: limit it, and you make the sin a light thing. Moreover, the belief in eternal punishment, however suppressed, leaves a blank and dark ultimate prospect before the sinner's mind; but this prospect is removed by the limitation of punishment; and in the place of a cloudy termination of the view, which the sinner at any rate had rather have removed, and which, therefore, must so far operate as a stimulus to that change of life which alone can remove it, he has a bright ultimate termination anyhow, whether he changes his

way of life, or whether he does not: and, therefore, he loses a stimulus to change, which even the most careless must in some way feel.”*

This notion that eternal punishment is indispensable as a sanction for morality, has been pushed still further; and, to some, it appears to have been a source of regret that something, even more terrible than everlasting torture, cannot be devised.—“Whosoever considers how ineffectual the threatening, even of eternal torments, is to the greatest part of sinners, will soon be satisfied that a less penalty than that of eternal suffering would, to the far greatest part of mankind, have been, in all probability, of little or no force; and that if anything more terrible could have been threatened to the workers of iniquity, it had not been unreasonable; because it would all have been little enough to deter men effectually from sin.”† An amazing statement this, but only an exaggeration of the ordinary theory.

It was long an axiom with politicians that, if any particular species of crime became dominant, the method to be adopted for its repression was unique—namely, an increase of the penalties annexed. Should such increase prove insufficient, a further addition was to be imposed, and so on until the highest penalty which the law was able to inflict became annexed to the prevailing offence. This theory tinged all our penal legislation for ages, but its fallacy, so far as temporal government is concerned, has been long recognized; and its practice, in Great Britain at least, has been

* *The Christian Remembrancer*, vol. xxvii. p. 233.—The reader will observe that it is here, as usual, assumed that the denial of eternal punishment is equivalent to the assertion of universal ultimate restoration.

† Whitby, *Discourse on Eternal Punishment*.

consequently abandoned. We should never dream of hanging a man now-a-days for cutting down a cherry-tree, or stealing a shilling, no matter how common either of these crimes might become. But it is curious to notice how this long exploded fallacy still lingers in theology. The passages just quoted afford two beautiful specimens. They both plainly assert that severity or intensity of punishment is the only real check upon crime; quite ignoring the well-established truth, that it is not so much the magnitude as the certainty of the penalty, which is found to be effectual as the main deterring force. Whether, considered in this point of view, the doctrine of eternal punishment exercises a salutary effect on morality, we may now proceed to examine.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ABOLITION OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL
PUNISHMENT, CONSIDERED AS TO ITS PROBABLE
EFFECT ON MORALITY.

ALL know that the sanguinary penal code of the last century operated, indirectly, but powerfully, as a stimulus to crime. Witnesses would not come forward, juries refused to convict, when the result of their action would be the sacrifice of the life of a fellow-creature for a trifling offence. Severity of punishment, therefore, defeated its own end, by annexing a sort of security to crime, and thus removing the principal restraining force—certainty of retribution. Now, although no such mode of evasion can avail the sinner when he stands before the Judge at the Great Assize—where no subordinate agencies, open to the weakness of human sympathies, can intervene in arrest of judgment,—yet, in this case also, the severity of the penalty denounced, very often produces, though in quite a different way, precisely the same practical effect.

For, we must remember that, considered as a force deterring from crime, it is not the certainty of punishment, but the sinner's belief in that certainty—not the *objective*, but the *subjective* certainty—which is of any avail. Even in temporal government it is quite possible to conceive that severe punishment might, almost uniformly, be the lot of the offender, and yet that he

might very plausibly hope for comparative impunity. Such might be the case under any system of watchful police, where the sentence of the law, though of extreme severity, was invariably carried into execution in a foreign land. And I am persuaded that the practical effect of denunciations of eternal punishment is, in most cases, the destruction, or, at the least, the very considerable weakening, of the sinner's belief in a future retribution of any kind. It is thus we may account for the fact, admitted by all, that they are wholly ineffective in repressing vice.*

The train of thought by which, from the dogma of *eternal* punishment, the sinner deduces the conclusion that he shall escape *all* punishment, is short and simple.

* It is a well-known fact that the Roman Catholic church attributes extraordinary expiatory power to suffering *in this life*, in comparison with suffering *in the next world*. A comparatively mild penance, of a few hours, is held to avail as satisfaction for a crime which would require years of purgatorial torments, equal in intensity to those of hell itself, to expiate. Nor is this notion any peculiarity of the modern Romish system. More or less, it has, through all time, pervaded the Christian church. In the second century we find the church of Smyrna describing the martyrs as having, by the suffering of a single hour, redeemed themselves from eternal punishment.—*Καὶ προσέχοντες τῇ τοῦ Χριστοῦ χάριτι τῶν κοσμικῶν κατεφρόνου βασάνων, διὰ μιᾶς ὥρας τὴν αἰώνιον κόλασιν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι.*—*Martyrium Polycarpi*, cap. ii.

This widely diffused opinion admits of but one satisfactory explanation; namely, a lurking disbelief *in any future punishments at all*. The general tone of society, in speaking of "the Devil," affords a strong confirmation of the fact that such scepticism is common. The *Ingoldsby Legends* is a work which affords amusement to thousands upon thousands; though three-fourths of the fun consists of jokes about the Devil and Hell-fire. And yet, if the public really believed in any punishments after death, no such book could have been tolerated. The fact appears to be simply this; about earthly sufferings there can be no doubt; but the tremendous severity, and virtual uniformity, asserted of future punishments, combine to throw discredit on their reality. A result which is surely not favourable to morality.

He may be aware that the load of guilt which rests upon him is great and terrible, but still he feels that no amount of finite sin can *justly* render him liable to infinite punishment. And the voice of conscience within him, in spite of every theologian, loudly proclaims that the Judge, at whose bar he is to stand, is just. Feeling, then, and rightly feeling, that the infinite sentence would be unjust, and, being at the same time, told by our popular theologians, that he is sure of either eternal hell or heaven, it is easy to see how hope may spring up within him, and how he may bring himself to believe that, as God is surely just, and hell eternal, and as, bad though he may be, he does not deserve *eternal* punishment, he may be admitted to heaven after all.

This, I believe to be very often the practical effect of the doctrine on the sinner. And the conclusion is greatly strengthened by that other amazing dogma of the virtual equality of all rewards and punishments in the future life—the same eternal lake of fire for him who, though generally well-conducted, died suddenly in some trifling fault; and for the hoary perpetrator of the longest and blackest series of crimes which have ever stained a human being,—the same abode of everlasting peace and joy for the saint who, through a long and weary pilgrimage, has striven to walk in his Master's steps; and for him who, after a life of unmixed wickedness, with his last breath gasps out the enchanted formula, "I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ."

This scepticism as to a future retribution, induced by the doctrine of eternal punishment, is surely a result not favourable to morality. All admit that this doctrine is the main stay of the apostles of infidelity, and thus

directly checks the spread of the pure morality of the gospel. All admit that it has driven numberless sincere and pious Christians, though not professional theologians, to despair, if not for themselves, for others as dear to them as themselves. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema,"* writes St. Paul. Can any man in his senses maintain that to tell a sinner that, if he does not believe, the Lord Jesus Christ will consign him to everlasting flames of fire, has any tendency to produce such love? *Fear* it may possibly produce, infidelity probably, but certainly no love.† And if we love him not, are we likely to keep his commandments? In fact, so far from being necessary as a sanction for morality, I believe that, considered with reference to morals, this dreadful dogma has been productive of evil almost unmixed.‡

* 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

† The following is a specimen of Paley's mode of awakening in the breast of the sinner that love which all should feel for their Heavenly Father:—"How terrible a fate it must be, to find ourselves at the day of judgment the objects of God's wrath, may be conceived in some sort, by considering what stores of inexhaustible misery are always in his power. With our present constitutions, if he do but touch the smallest part of our bodies, if a nerve in many places goes wrong, what torture we endure! Let any man who has felt, or rather whilst he is feeling, the agony of some bodily torment, only reflect, what a condition that must be, which had to suffer this *continually*, which night and day was to undergo the same, without prospect of cessation or relief, and thus to go on: and then ask, for what he would knowingly bring himself into this situation; what pleasure, what gain, would be an inducement?"

‡ "And what was the moral tendency of the doctrine? I had never borne to dwell upon it: but I before long suspected that it promoted malignity and selfishness, and was the real clue to the cruelties perpetrated under the name of religion. For he who does dwell on it, must comfort himself under the prospect of his brethren's eternal misery, by the selfish expectation of personal blessedness."—Newman, (Francis), *Phases of Faith*, p. 48.

It is important, also, to bear in mind that the very same principle which is the basis of this belief in the essential antagonism between the negation of eternal punishment and the morality of mankind, would lead a great deal further. It would lead to no less than the denial of the grand Christian doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins. An able writer, who is an unbeliever in the divine origin of Christianity, writes as follows on this subject:—

“This doctrine—that sins can be forgiven, and the consequences of them averted—has in all ages been a fertile source of mischief. Perhaps few of our intellectual errors have fructified in a vaster harvest of evil, or operated more powerfully to impede the moral progress of our race. While it has been a source of unspeakable comfort to the penitent, a healing balm to the wounded spirit—while it has saved many from hopelessness, and enabled those to recover themselves who would otherwise have flung away the remnant of their virtue in despair; yet, on the other hand, it has encouraged millions—*feeling what a safety was in store for them in ultimate resort*—to persevere in their career of folly or crime—to ignore or despise those natural laws which God has laid down to be the guides and beacons of our conduct—to continue to do ‘that which was pleasant in their own eyes’—convinced that nothing was irrevocable, that—however dearly they might have to pay for re-integration—repentance could at any time redeem their punishment, and *undo the past*. The doctrine has been noxious in exact ratio to the baldness and nakedness with which it has been propounded. In the Catholic Church of the middle ages we see it perhaps in its grossest form, when pardon was sold, bargained for, rated at a fixed

price...Men would have been far more careful of their deeds had they believed that those deeds would inevitably bear their natural consequences, exempt from after intervention—than when they held that penitence and pardon could at any time unlink the chain of sequences.”*

These views with respect to the forgiveness of sins are obviously based on the same principle as the ordinary belief that eternal punishment is indispensable as a sanction for morality. It is perfectly true that both the doctrine of the Forgiveness of Sins, and that of the Finiteness of Future Punishment, are capable of abuse, and, in consequence of such abuse, results disastrous to morality may undoubtedly ensue. But we never dream of rejecting the former in consequence of such possible—even actual—results. We have no fears for the moral effect of the proclamation—“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”† Why, then, may we not hold that punishment, short of everlasting agony, but involving no *necessary* ultimate admission to eternal bliss, may be sufficient as a restraint from sin—sufficient at least to the same extent as the thunders of eternal damnation are found in practice to be effectual? I have not the slightest doubt that such a doctrine would be found effectual to a far greater extent; for the subjective increase in the certainty of punishment would immensely more than counter-balance the reduction in its amount.

Thus the denial of the doctrine of eternal punishment, so far from being destructive or prejudicial,

* Greg. *The Creed of Christendom*, p. 244.

† Isaiah, i. 18.

would be of positive benefit to morality. But it should not be forgotten that a different conclusion on this point would be no reason for hesitating to reject that doctrine. On its own merits it must stand or fall; and we have seen that it is in direct and immediate contradiction with the Morality of the Supreme Being.

It would be difficult to conceive a doctrine more ingeniously calculated for the extirpation of every trace of morality, than that theory which teaches the absolute predestination from all eternity of each individual to hell or heaven. It tells us that the irrevocable sentence has been passed already—that no strivings of the reprobate—no atrocities of the elect, can avail in shifting by a single hair-breadth their everlasting dwelling. Surely, we might conclude, if such a doctrine as this could once gain general admission, it would be the signal for every form of riot and mad debauchery. And yet the Calvinist does not repudiate this most repulsive dogma, in dread of any such result. Nor does the dreaded result, however naturally anticipated, ensue. We do not find that all Calvinists are abandoned profligates; many of them are far better than their horrible creed.

So far, then, as the interests of morality are concerned, no objection can be raised to the doctrine of finite punishment in the world to come. And to all objections derived from the obscurity of the end, or final cause, of such punishments, our all-but absolute ignorance of everything connected with the future life, furnishes a complete answer. As to either the nature or the uses of future punishments—whether they shall be the results of general laws, or special inflictions—whether they shall be exemplary, reformatory, or conducive to some wholly unknown end, we are hopelessly

in the dark. That they shall not be eternal, is all we may *confidently* assert about them, inasmuch as such punishments would be contradictory to what we know of God.

But the same ignorance which forbids the assertion that some of these punishments are reformatory, renders the denial of the same proposition invalid also. This is not admitted by the defenders of eternal punishment, all of whom dogmatically lay down the negative.—“Scripture plainly asserts that all the wicked and ungodly who have been scattered through this world, shall hereafter be collected together, and united with evil spirits who have rebelled against God, and we can form no hope of reformation for such a society as this.” To this I reply, such a “society” is a phantom of the imagination. It is perfectly true that in one striking passage, which we have already pretty fully discussed, the division of all mankind into two bodies—those on the right hand, and those on the left—is explicitly affirmed. But, admitting this allegorical description in its narrowest and most literal sense, I should like to know where it is asserted in Scripture either plainly or obscurely, that among the vast multitudes on the left hand, no partitions shall be ever set up, by which even these may be sub-divided into separate classes, each to be dealt with according to their merits,—so that each individual may undergo the severe or the lenient sentence unambiguously asserted by Christ Himself. (Luke xii. 47-8.) We are certainly not *told* this, and therefore we are not entitled to propound it dogmatically; but at the same time,—remembering that we are scarcely told *anything*,—we are certainly not entitled to deny its possibility, from the mere fact that it has not been revealed. Thus I hold that the above-

stated theory, that the wicked* shall form in the future world one huge undivided and indivisible society, is a pure phantasm of the brain. It is not involved in *any* Scriptural statement, it is directly contradictory both to reason and justice, and we are quite at liberty to reject it.

The Romish view of moral reformation in Purgatory by the mere endurance of physical pain, is obviously irrational—*

“It is assumed, contrary to fact and truth,
That Suffering is, in itself, remedial of Sin.
Contrariwise oftener Suffering is a cause of Sin :
It hardens the heart, and is not normally remedial.
Constraint, not Suffering, is the great means of training.”†

But is it impossible to conceive a state to which *some* might be consigned, in which the laws of life and nature are so arranged that sin is instantly and invariably visited by severe physical punishment? Sin, as a general rule, even in this life, entails such punishment; but here the rule has many exceptions, and, in most cases, the resulting suffering is long delayed. Thus, the drunkard and the sensualist most frequently, even in this world, pay a heavy reckoning for their sins;

* On the use of the doctrine of Purgatory in the Roman Catholic system, M. Comte remarks as follows : “ Il serait facile de reconnaître que l’institution, si amèrement critiquée, du purgatoire fut, au contraire, très heureusement introduite dans la pratique sociale du catholicisme, à titre d’indispensable correctif fondamental de l’éternité des peines futures : car, autrement, cette éternité, sans laquelle les prescriptions religieuses ne pouvaient être efficaces, eût évidemment déterminé souvent ou un relâchement funeste ou un effroyable désespoir, également dangereux l’un et autre pour l’individu et pour la société, et entre lesquels le génie catholique est parvenu à organiser cette ingénieuse issue, qui permettait de graduer immédiatement, avec une scrupuleuse précision, l’application effective du procédé religieux aux convenances de chaque cas réel.”—*Cours de Philosophie Positive*, tom. v. p. 381.

† Newman’s *Theism*, p. 60.

but, both the occasional exceptions, and the usual long delay, detract greatly from the efficacy of the penalties. If it were the case that when a man got drunk, he must inevitably, and immediately on coming to his senses, undergo an amount of physical pain, equalling in intensity a severe surgical operation, we could hardly doubt that a few repetitions would work a perfect cure in the most confirmed drunkard. And a similar arrangement, in the case of all other vices, would assuredly operate in precisely the same way. Is it then *quite impossible* that something analogous to this may, in the next world, await *some* sinners; and that a protracted course of such treatment may ultimately eradicate habits of vice, which in their earthly life proved inveterate?

But I venture upon such speculations only in the sense of the *argumentum ad hominem*. Our ignorance of the future is too great to admit of any material for even plausible conjecture. Yet when writers do not hesitate to dogmatize on the opposite side, and confidently lay it down that reformation of the sinner, *in any case* is *absolutely impossible* after death, it becomes legitimate, as a reply, to show that, so far from this being evident, a state adapted for reformation may be easily conceived.

And what right has any one to say that to proclaim such a doctrine as this would eradicate, or even be injurious to, morality? The "orthodox" divine, addressing the sinner, tells him, indeed, that God is Love, and willeth not his death, but rather that he should be converted and live—adding, in the same breath, that if he is not converted, He will cast him undying into a furnace of fire, to writhe in agony for ever and ever. The preacher is not aware that these two

propositions, being contradictory, are mutually destructive; but the sinner, to whom they are addressed, sees it clearly, and the result is that the preaching is in vain. Can we wonder at it when the "Divine Love" is presented in such a hideous guise?

But if, instead of this detestable, and practically worthless dogma, we were to tell him, without at the same time contradicting ourselves, that God is Love, and is willing to grant him life immortal, but that man is capable of withstanding the divine grace, and refusing to accept the gift: that the end of sin is death,—not life in fire, but death eternal:—that, even if after this life, another chance should be granted him, before the final sentence of everlasting destruction is pronounced, a school of discipline, harsher and sterner than this world, must be passed, before bad habits contracted here can be eradicated, and unholy desires overcome:—if we were to tell him that in this life the salvation of Christ is offered, surely and freely, to all who will receive it, but that we are not commissioned to offer anything beyond the grave,—surely there can be no reason for supposing that such a scheme would be destructive to human virtue. Morality need fear nothing from the proclamation that God is Love, though divested of its virtual contradictory, the Sentence of Everlasting Life in Fire;—and that His Judgment is Just, though we reject an act of injustice, which no earthly court would venture to perpetrate, as the ideal of His Award.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ABOLITION OF THE DOCTRINE OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT, CONSIDERED IN REFERENCE TO THE EVIDENCES OF REVEALED RELIGION.

BUT it is in reference to the New Testament itself, that the abolition of the dogma of eternal punishment would be found of most advantage. I have already referred* to the extreme, and daily increasing, importance of the moral evidences of Christianity; and that this doctrine overbalances and destroys these evidences may be easily shown.

Any one who has read the preceding pages, must have seen that I am no admirer of Calvinism. In fact I have seen so much of the pernicious effects of this repulsive system, that I know no words sufficiently strong to express my abhorrence of it, or of any other theory which denies the morality of the Supreme Being.† And yet, considered as a piece of logic, the

* See p. 60.

† A new edition of "A Practical Discourse of God's Sovereignty," by Elisha Coles,—one of the most repulsive Calvinistic works I have ever seen,—was brought out, a few years ago, in Dublin, under the editorship of the Rev. C. S. Stanford, D.D. In a preface by the editor, the repugnance of any particular doctrine to morality, is distinctly laid down as a test or criterion of its divine origin. His words are as follows:—"As the pride of human reason loves to exalt itself above the wisdom of God, let us suspect that all is not right when men generally approve, and feel that we are nearer the truth, as God has declared it, when we advocate what men generally condemn." These words refer to such doctrines as Reprobation and

Calvinistic, or Augustinian doctrine is, as far as it goes, irrefragable. But one step, necessary to complete it, was omitted; and that defect has vitiated the whole system. The Election to Life is plainly taught in Scripture. Reprobation is not, but it follows so instantly from the former, that nothing short of abrogation of the Laws of Thought, can stop the inference. Many who admit the one, deny the other, but they do so only by setting the heart and the head in direct antagonism. Honor to them for having done so! Though inconsistent and illogical, they have escaped the deadly sin of the hard-hearted and selfish Calvinist, who ascribes what is—in the words of his own leader—"a horrible decree," to Almighty God.

But happily there is no need for thus setting Morality and Reason in opposition. Difficulty enough

Particular Redemption, which "men generally condemn" on *moral*, not intellectual grounds.

The Reverend Doctor gives an equally singular proof of the merits of the book he has endeavoured to resuscitate:—"If the Lord had not a gracious end to answer in this work, it is not likely that forty-seven editions of it should have preceded the present one." I was under the impression that there are instances on record of very bad and immoral books having found an extensive sale.

Dr. Kippis, in the "Biographia Britannica," attributes to Coles' work his first renunciation of Calvinism. Dr. Stanford comments as follows upon this statement:—"This is another painful proof of the hard speeches which they must be prepared to encounter, who assert God's truth in opposition to human and carnal prejudice. It will be evident to any one who reads this work, that if Dr. Kippis read it at all,"—[here, without a shadow of a ground for it, *insinuating* that Dr. Kippis is telling a lie]—"he must have done so very hastily and carelessly; and granting he did so read it, and at the age he states," (13 or 14 years,) "he must have brought to the doctrines it advocates an antecedent aversion, which plainly discoloured his view of the whole work."—*An antecedent aversion!* I should hope so. Human nature is truly bad enough, but there are, thank God, few of us so bad, as not to receive, with some "antecedent aversion," a system which invests our Creator with the attributes of a fiend.

we shall find; in reconciling them here, but no contradiction. To avoid it we have only to render the Calvinistic system complete by annexing one legitimate inference—the *reductio ad absurdum* of the doctrine of eternal punishment.

For, the absolute predestination of one class of His creatures to eternal life, and another to eternal fire, destroys the conception of God as a Moral Being. All evasion of this is hopeless. No meaningless form of words, such as—“it seems to us unjust,” or—“we cannot reconcile it with morality,”—avails anything. The repugnance of the doctrine to morality stands out in the clear light of Intuition. We see it as plainly as we see that two and two make four. If this is to be our creed, Ahriman, not Jehovah, is the Ruler of the world.

“The doctrine of predestination itself, and its defence on the score of justice, rest upon the one doctrine of original sin. If you think the doctrine unjust, it is said, it is only because you do not realise what the doctrine of original sin is, and what it commits you to. You go on really, and in your heart thinking the human mass innocent before actual sin, and therefore you are scandalized at the antecedent consignment of any part of it to punishment. But suppose it really guilty, as your creed represents it, and you will not be scandalized at it. Fix upon your mind the existence of real ill-desert antecedent to actual sin, and condemnation will appear just and natural. The first step mastered, the second has no difficulty in it.”*

* Mozley's *Treatise on the Augustinian Doctrine of Predestination*, p. 14.

This is perfectly true. Admit the existence of real ill-desert antecedent to actual sin, and condemnation—but not eternal suffering—will of course appear just. But, unfortunately for the Calvinists, the difficulty of admitting this, is about the same as the difficulty of admitting that two and two are equal to fifty-five. The “justification” of predestination breaks down.

But, abolishing the dogma of eternal punishment, the paradox exists no more. No longer chained down to a tenet which destroys both the Justice and the Mercy of the Creator, we can bow down humbly before the Eternal Throne, and resign the issues of Life and Death into the hand of Him that sitteth thereon. With Him is not only the *power* but the *right* of withdrawing life at His own good pleasure. To Him it belongs to decide upon which of His creatures the free and unmerited gift of Immortality shall be bestowed. Sin and suffering, though finite, under His rule, are difficulties no doubt, difficulties not only great but insoluble; but it is only when the attribute of Infinity is presented as an element of the suffering of the finite, a contradiction of God’s moral nature results.

Thus the tremendous doctrine of Predestination and Election—a doctrine explicitly taught in Scripture—involves in every system of Natural Religion*—

* Professor Fraser, speaking of Mr. Mozley’s treatise, observes—“We are glad to have this evidence that Oxford in this generation can entertain, with considerate appreciation and historic impartiality, the profound ideas of Augustine and Calvin; and can see in the mysteries to which such ideas relate, facts common to human reason, and not peculiar to a sect of Christian divines.”—*Essays in Philosophy*, p. 283. It is perfectly true that the mysteries of Predestination form no peculiarity of the Christian system; they belong to Natural Religion, and are most unfairly urged as objections to Revelation. The error of both Augustine and Calvin consisted in overlooking the

denied only by shutting the eyes resolutely to the plain deliverances of Reason—is at once discharged from its antagonism to Morality;* an antagonism which was only caused by the doctrine of eternal punishment. And it is clear that to the evidences of Holy Scripture, an incalculable advantage is afforded by the ejection of the internal foe which menaced its very existence. No Infidel or Atheist can inflict such

legitimate issue of their doctrine, and this error is fatal to their theory; partial truth proves equivalent to total falsehood.

* The application of this doctrine, and that of Original Sin, to the case of infants who died unbaptized, was the great *crux* of both the early fathers and the mediæval school-men. St. Augustine turns these children into everlasting fire. Adopting the usual division into two classes, at the day of judgment, he lays it down distinctly that those unbaptized are not on the right hand, therefore they are on the left hand, therefore they are in eternal fire—“*Ecce exposuit tibi quid sit regnum, et quid sit ignis æternus; ut quando confitearis parvulum non futurum in regno, fatearis futurum in igne æterno.*”—(Mozley, p. 406.) It is right, however, to mention that in several other places of Augustine's works, this hideous doctrine is much modified for the better. I give the passage as a specimen of the moral state of the thorough-going Calvinist.

The following remarks of Jeremy Taylor, (quoted by Mr. Mozley, p. 361.) on such doctrines, coincide entirely with my own views:—“To say that for Adam's sin it is just in God to condemn infants to the eternal flames of hell, and to say that concupiscence or natural inclinations before they pass into any act would bring eternal condemnation from God's presence into the eternal portion of devils, are two such horrid propositions, that if any church in the world should expressly affirm them, I, for my part, should think it unlawful to communicate with her in the defence or profession of either, and to think it would be the greatest temptation in the world to make men not to love God, of whom men so easily speak such horrid things. . . . To condemn infants to hell for the fault of another, is to deal worse with them than God did to the very devils, who did not perish but by an act of their own most perfect choice. This, besides the formality of injustice or cruelty, does add and suppose a circumstance of a strange, ungentle contrivance. For, because it cannot be supposed that God should damn infants or innocents without cause, it finds out this way, that God, to bring His purposes to pass, should create a guilt for them, or bring them into an inevitable condition of being guilty by a way of His own inventing.”

deadly wounds on the authority of the Book, as are inflicted by those who maintain that its teaching is irrevocably committed to the eternity of future punishment. And, with each advancing wave of civilization, the injury accomplished is more clearly manifested. It is little, indeed, that one individual can effect towards the eradication of a doctrine which has once, from any causes, taken deep root; but, if it be his conviction that such doctrine, if not got rid of, is likely to prove fatal to his religion, his duty is plainly to do what little he can. And I believe that this doctrine of eternal punishment is now vigorously at work in undermining Christianity. Few educated and intelligent laymen believe in an everlasting life of torture; they listen indeed with civility to the clergyman who inculcates it, but their civility is not unmingled with contempt. And, as education spreads, we shall find the circle of sceptics as to this dogma gradually filling the land—sceptics who will assuredly extend their scepticism to the vital truths of Christianity, if the dogma is pertinaciously set forward as inseparable from the Gospel. It is easy to reply that “not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called,”* but we must not forget that the service required of us, is a *reasonable* service, which cannot demand belief in what contradicts both reason and morality.

And, once the Bible goes, immortal life goes with it. Mr. Theodore Parker asserts,—“that man is immortal I consider as fixed as the proposition that one and one are two,”†—but, apart from the New Testament, I cannot see it. The physical arguments for

* 1 Cor. i. 26.

† *Theism, Atheism, and the Popular Theology*, p. 161.

the immortality of the soul are certainly useful as auxiliaries to revelation; but, taken by themselves, they are all-but worthless. Plato and Cicero and Butler reason ingeniously on the subject, but their conclusions amount to little more than this,—that, after all, it is *not absolutely impossible* that something may survive the shock of death. This is but a crumbling foundation for our hopes of a future life. And recent researches in the physiology of the mind, have certainly no tendency to support our hopes of immortality. Every one acquainted with such investigations, is aware that, long as the brain has been recognized to be the immediate organ of the mind, a much more intimate connection between Thought and Matter than was before, except by absolute materialists, suspected, has now been brought to light.* Thus, so far as human

* “If it so please us, we are at liberty to say mind is a source of power; but we must then mean by mind, the consciousness in conjunction with the whole body; and we must also be prepared to admit, that the physical energy is the indispensable condition, and the consciousness the casual. Only in one class of animal forces is feeling present; the rest work on in deep unconsciousness. The real lesson derivable from the survey of the living frame, as regards the sources of mechanical momentum, is summed up in the analogy of the steam-engine, where active chemical combinations give birth to moving force, through the medium of a certain mechanism. Physiologists are now pretty well agreed on this point, and the case is brought under the head of the grand doctrine of the interchangeability of the natural powers—Heat, Electricity, Chemical Affinity, Mechanical Force—otherwise termed their ‘correlation,’ which physical inquirers have of late years been occupied in developing. Instead of mind being the cause of gravity, gravity and the other physical forces, are the *sine qua non* of mind in human beings and animals. Our only experience of mental manifestations is in connexion with a gravitating framework of exceedingly complicated mechanism, and concentrating in a small compass numerous physical, chemical, physiological forces, balanced and adjusted, in an organization, self-supporting indeed, but requiring perpetual renovation, and perpetual means of elimination. We find that the mental property, in alliance

science is concerned, the dissolution of the soul at death, so far from being disproved, is not improbable. Quench the light of revelation, and a future,—not indeed as bad as the so-called orthodox future,—but dark and dreary, and unilluminated by one star, is the inevitable lot of man—

“And he, shall he,

Who loved, who suffer'd countless ills,
Who battled for the True, the Just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
A discord. Dragons of the prime,
That tare each other in their slime,
Were mellow music match'd with him.”*

Yet where is he to turn for hope? He “rolled the psalm to wintry skies,”—he “built him fanes of fruitless prayer,”—and there was no voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. Most of the Spiritual School of Christianity openly admit that the prospect of immortal life is, at the best, but vague and uncertain. Even Mr. Francis Newman, who appears to cling tenaciously to this doctrine, admits that “a state of aspiration” is all he can attain to. In another passage he states explicitly,—“I cannot feel sure that eternity (in the future as in the past) is not as much an incommunicable prerogative of God as Omnipotence or Omniscience.”† And in his more recent work on “Theism,” he does not get beyond *hope* :—

with this corporeal aggregate, is remarkably susceptible to every physical effect and every trifling disturbance. In a word, mind, as known to us in our own constitution, is the very last thing that we should set up as an independent power, swaying and sustaining the powers of the natural world.”—Alexander Bain, *The Emotions and the Will*, pp. 477—8.

* *In Memoriam*, lv.

† *The Soul*, p. 146 and p. 147.

“What the Hereafter may be, and where, how, when—we know not;
 But to believe *some* Hereafter for the good, confirms our noblest thoughts.
 If the wise man does not yet confide, surely he must cherish hope in it:
 And Hope is the supplement of Faith, as Faith of Sight.” *

But strike from the popular creed one dogma,—not Future Punishment, not Eternal Death, but Eternal Punishment,—and the Holy Book, with its Life and Immortality, is placed upon a basis that cannot be moved. Difficulties will still remain; objections will still be raised; but let the Christian system be once healed of its deadly wound, and they will fall but faint and weak. No longer are we troubled with secret doubts of the goodness and justice of the Lord of Heaven. We are so framed that we cannot believe contradictories; if we admit the one of two such propositions, we *must* reject the other. God’s great Love to man, manifested alike in Creation and Redemption, is one thing. The sentence of everlasting torments is another. We may believe *one* of these dogmas; but assent to both, except mere verbal assent, is only attainable by an abuse of language,—by using the word “Love” to denote what is the reverse of its ordinary meaning.

No truer sentence was ever written than the concluding words of those sermons which, in the course of this essay, I have often been obliged to condemn—“To know that Divine Love, and to feel some answering love in our own hearts, is the best security against that fear of death, temporal and eternal, which has held many in bondage; our best training for that

* *Theism, Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 94.

happy state when perfect love shall cast out all fear." But the one dogma of eternal punishment, when duly considered, destroys, for most of us, the possibility of such answering love; and, for the Love of Christ which passeth knowledge, presents us with an unknown, but fearful, attribute,—not even dimly shadowed in its mocking name.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A. p. 50.

ON THE ETHICS OF VICARIOUS SUFFERING.

THE justification of Eternal Punishment, *so far as* it is made to rest on the gratuitous assumption that the spectacle of its infliction may be beneficial to other portions of creation, leads at once to the consideration of Vicarious Suffering. Once it is admitted that, considered solely in reference to the unhappy victim, to whose finite sin an infinite penalty has been annexed, everlasting torments cannot be justified, we must regard him as suffering vicariously for the good of those others who are kept in the right path, and thus from suffering *themselves*, by the contemplation of his agonies. We must therefore enquire, Is such vicarious suffering justifiable; and, if so, on what grounds?

And here I must state explicitly that the following remarks have no reference whatever to the sufferings of our Lord. All who believe in the Divinity of Jesus Christ must admit that, although in order to suit our finite apprehensions, His Death and Passion are described in Scripture as a sacrifice to appease the wrath of the Father against sin, those tremendous events, when considered as transactions between the Father and the Son, must be regarded as absolutely transcendental in their nature, and that as to their *modus operandi* in the remission of sin, the most learned

divine is as ignorant as a New Zealander. And yet, even with respect to His sufferings, the main ethical difficulty is removed by the explicit statement that they were truly voluntary.

That one human being *does* suffer for the faults of another, is a law of such extreme generality that it is hardly necessary to produce instances. The case of children incurring the penalties due to the sins and follies of their parents, is perhaps the most obvious. Not merely in respect of worldly goods, but also both morally and physically, they share the punishment of the guilty ancestor; and very frequently, the heaviest portion of the burthen, sometimes the whole of it, is borne by them. Now that such should be the case, is obviously inconsistent with the fundamental notions of Justice—that Justice “*in qua virtutis splendor est maximus, ex qua boni viri nominantur,*”—which consists “*sum cuique tribuendo,*”*—which re-echoes the precept “the soul that sinneth, *it* shall die.”† And yet the generality of this law is such, that its fundamental injustice is often overlooked; and it appears to be assumed that a rule so widely extended cannot be intrinsically wrong. But no wideness of diffusion can ever turn Wrong into Right; and, accordingly, a little reflection almost always makes manifest the essential contradiction which exists between this law and the precepts of morality.

There is one way, and one way only, of reconciling this notorious fact with the moral character of the Supreme Being; and that is the consideration that, in all such cases of suffering, we see only a very small portion of the case. We cannot track the sufferer

* Cicero, *De Officiis*, Lib. I. cap. 5, 7.

† Ezekiel, xviii. 20.

beyond the grave, and we can believe that beyond the grave there lies an unknown world, in which, sooner or later, whatever was amiss here shall be scrupulously set to rights. But the writer who represents vicarious suffering as *eternal*, cuts from under us this escape. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the general ethical question rather more minutely.

The conferring of happiness on one individual, A, or the averting of suffering from him, through the instrumentality of the infliction of suffering on another individual, B, must be ethically treated on quite different grounds according as we suppose the agent to be the Supreme Being, or to be a finite creature, such as one of ourselves. And in these two cases, the act is, if justifiable at all, to be justified from wholly different principles. Let us at present confine ourselves to the latter case, and examine the question, Under what circumstances is it ethically allowable for *us* to inflict suffering on another creature,—rational or irrational,—for the benefit either of ourselves or of others different from the sufferer?

And here we are at once met by a difficulty which faces us at the commencement of almost every ethical discussion; and which has had more influence than any thing else, in originating the futile exercises of the casuists,—namely, the extreme *indefiniteness* of the ideas annexed to the terms pain, suffering, happiness, joy,—and the consequent indistinctness which is thereby diffused over their connection with the more strictly ethical conceptions of Vice and Virtue. For, we may suppose the suffering of B to be gradually diminished, to the rank of a trifling momentary inconvenience, and, at the same time, the happiness thereby conferred upon A, to be augmented to an

enormous amount, in both intensity and duration. Or, on the contrary, we may conceive the agonies of B to be excruciating and permanent, while the gratification thence accruing to A is but slight and transient. Neither of these cases admits discussion; in the former, no one will dispute the morality of the infliction—in the latter, no one will justify such a piece of atrocious cruelty. And it is obvious that between these two extremes, an infinite number of cases, fading one into the other by imperceptible gradations, must be admitted to lie; it is therefore impossible to draw a definite line of demarcation between what, in this respect, is morally admissible and what is not.

We must, therefore, be on our guard against this application of what may be conveniently termed the Old Bailey Method; and it must be understood that, in the following observations, by the term 'suffering' and its correlatives is meant what is really, in reference to the nature and capacity of the sufferer, *considerable in amount*; and the same with respect to 'happiness' and the corresponding terms.

That we have, in certain cases, the right to inflict such suffering, in order to avert greater evils from either ourselves or others, can hardly be disputed. The case of the inferior animals is the most convenient for the purpose of illustration; inasmuch as we thus avoid embarrassments arising from the consideration of certain 'rights' which are possessed by beings co-ordinate with ourselves, the infringement of which greatly complicates the question.

Let us take, for example, a practice which has recently been made the subject of a good deal of discussion,—that of the vivisection of animals. I do not speak of it as an exhibition of the dexterity of

the operator, for *that* admits no discussion as a question of ethics,—but as a process, by means of which physiological results, of material value for the alleviation, and even for the prevention, of disease and suffering, may be obtained, and which results are absolutely unattainable by any other means. That this is allowable, I say, can hardly be denied, although the precise point at which it becomes morally inadmissible, is incapable of definition. But it is obvious that the reason *why* such a proceeding is in any case justifiable, is because suffering is thereby alleviated, and *we are incapable of alleviating it in any other way*. We are, therefore, justified in inflicting on the irrational animal an amount of pain, which, were it a perfect moral agent, it would, under the circumstances of the case, have certainly submitted to of its own accord.

In applying this principle of vicarious suffering to the case of a rational being, it is evident that the limits, within which we are restrained, are greatly narrowed; though the application of the “Old Bailey Method” shows that there still exists a certain range. The rights of the individual are sacrificed for the benefit of the multitude; but the justification of the deed rests entirely on the fact of *the weakness and imperfection* of those by whom, in order to avoid a greater evil, the sacrifice is enforced. Thus the state of the case appears to be this:—Weak, imperfect creatures are, to a small extent, justifiable in inflicting suffering on other, even on rational beings, if such suffering be absolutely necessary for the avoidance of greater suffering elsewhere—whether greater in intensity, or of wider diffusion, does not affect the question. And it may further be remarked that if

we were to suppose pain to be inflicted, not for the purpose of preventing greater *positive evil* for others, but only for the purpose of promoting their *positive happiness*, the field for its legitimate use would be further contracted by a very considerable amount.*

So much, in justification of Finite Vicarious Suffering, when inflicted by an imperfect being. We

* The following curious passage from the *Shepherd of Hermas*, bearing upon the subject, presents a highly unorthodox view of the nature of future punishments:—"Dico illi: 'etiannunc, domine, demonstra mihi.' 'Quid inquiris?' inquit. Dixi ei: 'an per idem tempus crucientur, qui discedunt a timore Dei, quantum usi fuerint falsa dulcedine ac voluptatibus?' Ait mihi: 'per idem tempus etiam cruciantur.' Et dixi ei: 'exiguum igitur cruciantur; oportebat autem eos, qui sic percipiunt voluptates, ut Dominum obliviscantur, septies tantum pati poenarum.' Ait mihi: 'fatuus es, nec intelligis hujus poenæ virtutem.' Et dixi: 'si enim intelligerem, domine, non interrogarem, ut demonstrares mihi.'

"Ἀκούε οὖν ἀμφοτέρων τὴν δύναμιν, τῆς τρυφῆς καὶ τοῦ βασάνου. Τῆς τρυφῆς καὶ τῆς ἀπάτης ὁ χρόνος ὥρα ἐστὶ μία· τῆς δὲ βασάνου ὥραι τριάκοντα ἡμερῶν δύναμιν ἔχουσαι. Ἐὰν οὖν μίαν ἡμέραν τις τρυφήσῃ καὶ ἀπατηθῇ, μίαν δὲ ἡμέραν βασανισθῇ, ἐνιαυτοῦ ὀλοκλήρου ἰσχὺν ἔχει ἢ ἡμέρα ἐκείνη τῆς βασάνου. "Ὅσας οὖν ἡμέρας τρυφήσῃ τις, τοσοῦτους ἐνιαυτοὺς βασανισθῆσεται. Βλέπεις οὖν, ὅτι τῆς τρυφῆς καὶ ἀπάτης ὁ χρόνος οὐδὲν ἐστίν, τῆς δὲ τιμωρίας καὶ βασάνου πολὺς.'

Dixi ei: 'domine, quoniam non intelligo omnia tempora hæc dulcedinis, voluptatis ac poenæ, lucidius mihi de his expone.' Respondit mihi dicens: 'insipientia tua tibi perseveranter inhæret. Nonne vis potius mentem tuam purificare, et Deo servire? Vide, ne forte tempore exacto tu insipiens reperiaris. Audi nunc, quemadmodum vis, quo facilius intelligas. Qui uno die commiserit se voluptatibus, et fecerit quidquid appetit animus ejus, plurima repletur stultitia, nec intelligit, quid admittat; ac die postero obliviscitur, quid fecerit pridie; dulcedo enim et voluptas mundana nullam memoriam habent propter stultitiam, quæ insita est illis. Quum vero uno die accesserit homini cruciatus ac poena, toto anno torquetur; magnam enim memoriam possidet poena. Toto igitur anno dolens meminit, et tunc recordatur dulcedinis illius vanæ ac voluptatis, et sentit, propterea se poenas pati. Quicumque igitur se dulcedini et voluptati tali tradiderint, sic puniuntur; quoniam vitam habentes ipsi se reddunt obnoxios morti.'"—*Hermæ Pastor*, Lib. iii. Similit. 6.

now come to the totally different case of Eternal Vicarious Suffering, *alleged* to proceed directly from the Hand of Almighty God. And, I have no hesitation in saying that this latter is absolutely incapable of justification. We can scarcely venture to call the Supreme Being a Necessary Agent; but even if we were to hold, as some have not scrupled to do,* that He is not strictly omnipotent, and that sin, unrepented in this life, *must* be everlastingly punished; and that thus eternal punishment is morally justifiable,—the answer is obvious,—God was not, at all events, constrained to create. Unless we are prepared to adopt virtual atheism, by reducing the Creator to the rank of a mere machine, such as a steam-engine or a galvanic battery, we must *at least* admit that He might have

* For instance, the late Archbishop Whately, in his *View of the Scripture Revelations of a Future State*, quotes with approbation the following passage from *Woodward's Essays*:—"If man could have been saved without it, would the Lord of Glory have been led as a sheep to the slaughter? If *it had been possible* (as he himself expresses it) for that cup to pass from him, would his Father have given it to him to drink? No. The death of the cross supersedes the necessity of every other proof, that there is no such thing as unlimited and absolute omnipotence."—Lect. viii.

To such speculations the following remarks of Butler supply an useful comment:—"Whether God could have saved the world by other means than the death of Christ, consistently with the general laws of his government—And, had not Christ come into the world, what would have been the future condition of those just persons over the face of the earth, for whom, Manasses in his prayer asserts, repentance was not appointed—are questions which have been, I fear, rashly determined, and perhaps with equal rashness contrary ways. The meaning of the first of these questions is greatly ambiguous: and neither of them can properly be answered, without going upon that infinitely absurd supposition, that we know the whole of the case. And perhaps the very inquiry, *what would have followed, if God had not done as he has*, may have in it some very great impropriety; and ought not to be carried on any further, than is necessary to help our partial and inadequate conceptions of things."—*Analogy*, Part II. chap. 5.

created or abstained from creating, according as He pleased. If, therefore, the happiness of one class of His creatures *could* only be secured by means of the *eternal* misery of another class, the Creative Act would be morally inadmissible. It would be, indeed, if this hypothesis were true, "a blunder infinite and inexcusable."*

And I have no doubt that, when we take into consideration the Absolute Perfection of the Morality of God, we shall arrive at the final conclusion that all suffering,—even temporary suffering,—so far forth as vicarious, shall be ultimately compensated *to the sufferer himself*, by the Great Being who made him. To what extent such suffering may proceed, we may safely leave in the hands of Him, who, once we ignore the dreadful doctrine of eternal punishment, we can truly hold to be both Infinitely Just, and Infinitely Merciful. It is not for us to define its limit. To *one* point, indeed, we can see clearly that it *may* extend,—to anything, namely, which the sufferer himself would prefer to annihilation; for, as the Almighty may at His own good pleasure revoke the life which He bestowed, *a fortiori* may He, for His own wise purposes, impose such sorrow or pain as the sufferer would rather

* "Some teach that the wicked will hereafter be condemned

And punished in flames that are not purifying,

Flames that harden sin and make it inveterate,

Evergrowing and unconquerable, unto endless despair;

Flames preservative of life and torment, of curses and hatred.

Never let me believe a frightful dream, deadly to piety,

A Pagan monstrosity made worse than in Pagan fable,

A horror which no proof imaginable could make credible;

Which hardens man's heart, if we believe such a gospel,

Overthrows God's justice, if he punish the finite by infinitude,

Overthrows his goodness, foresight and wisdom,

By making our creation a blunder infinite and inexcusable."—

Newman's *Theism*, p. 94.

undergo than be destroyed. And I do not venture to assert that the limit is even here. All that I do positively assert is that the range is not infinite, for we have seen that such infinity would destroy the only possible mode of reconciling the vicarious suffering of the creature with the Moral Character of the Infinite God. But, once clear of the doctrine which annulled the conception of Him as either Just, or Merciful, we are enabled, and we are morally bound, to submit everything to His Holy Will.

But, supposing we were to wave these *a priori* objections to the "vicarious" system of justifying eternal punishment, what are we to think of the conduct of the "other beings" who at such a fearful price, acquiring everlasting happiness, are able to enjoy themselves on such terms? This is a question which is completely ignored by the advocates of the system; and no wonder,—for their theory has a particularly ugly aspect from this point of view. It is not very easy to conceive in what way the spectacle of excruciating and permanent agony can be, as alleged, beneficial to the other orders of creation; but, suppose it to be so: Can we imagine any *moral* being accepting everlasting happiness *at the price of* the everlasting torture of another creature?

The self-styled elect may perhaps do so, but very many "publicans and sinners" would reject it with loathing and scorn.

Before leaving this question of vicarious suffering, I must not omit to notice another point of view from which it has been considered, and from which a singular conclusion has been deduced by some who deny the divine authority of the Scriptures. It has been urged that, by a being *of perfect goodness*, such a destiny

as even everlasting torments, would be voluntarily and cheerfully accepted, if the eternal welfare of his fellow-creatures were to be secured or promoted thereby. The proposition requires examination.

We have certainly two instances in the Bible itself where holy men expressed a wish to be blotted from the Book of Life for the sake of their brethren. Moses desires to share the fate of the Israelites, should pardon be refused to their sin; and Paul could wish himself accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.* In both of these instances, however, the fate invoked was *destruction*, eternal death, not eternal suffering. But the writers to whom I refer, carry this idea much further, and represent the future life of the righteous revealed in Scripture, *as a sanction for duty*, to be a positive blot upon the system. This view is put forward very strongly by Mr. Greg in the following passage:—

“To the orthodox Christian, who fully believes all he professes, cheerful resignation to the divine will is comparatively a natural, an easy, a simple thing. To the religious philosopher, it is the highest exercise of intellect and virtue. The man who has *realized* the faith that his own lot, in all its minutest particulars, is not only directly regulated by God,—but is so regulated by God as unerringly to work for his highest good,—with an express view to his highest good,—with such a man, resignation, patience, nay, cheerful acquiescence in all suffering and sorrow,

* Ex. xxxii. 32. Rom. ix. 3. “*Ecstasi quadam charitatis, et impotenti desiderio boni communionis incitati.*”—Bacon, *De Aug. Scient.*, Lib. vii. cap. 1.—“Ὁ μεγάλης ἀγάπης, ὃ τελειότητος ἀνυπερβλήτων! Παρρησιάζεται θεράπων πρὸς κύριον, αἰτεῖται ἀφ᾽ εἰσιν τῷ πλήθει, ἢ καὶ ἑαυτοῦ ἐξαλειφθῆναι μετ’ αὐτῶν ἀξιοί.”—1 *Clementis ad Cor.* c. 53.

appears to us to be in fact only the simple and practical expression of his belief. If, believing all this, he still murmurs and rebels at the trials and contrarieties of his lot, he is guilty of the childishness of the infant which quarrels with the medicine that is to lead it back to health and ease. But the religious Philosopher,—who, sincerely holding that a Supreme God created and governs this world, holds also that He governs it by laws which, though wise, just, and beneficent, are yet steady, unwavering, inexorable;—who believes that his agonies and sorrows are not specially ordained for *his* chastening, *his* strengthening, *his* elaboration and development,—but are incidental and necessary results of the operation of laws the best that could be devised for the happiness and purification of the species,—or perhaps not even that, but the best adapted to work out the vast, awful, glorious, eternal designs of the Great Spirit of the universe;—who believes that the ordained operations of Nature, which have brought misery to him, have, from the very unswerving tranquillity of their career, showered blessing and sunshine upon every other path,—that the unrelenting chariot of Time, which has crushed or maimed him in its allotted course, is pressing onward to the accomplishment of those serene and mighty purposes, to have contributed to which—even as a victim—is an honour and a recompense;—he who takes this view of Time, and Nature, and God, and yet bears his lot without murmur or distrust, because it is portion of a system, the best possible, *because ordained by God*,—has achieved a point of virtue, the highest, amid passive excellence, which humanity can reach;—and his reward and support must be found in the reflection that he is an unreluctant and self-

sacrificing co-operator with the Creator of the universe, and in the noble consciousness of being worthy, and capable, of so sublime a conception, yet so sad a destiny.

“In a comparison of the two resignations, there is no measure of their respective grandeurs. The orthodox sufferer fights the battle only on condition of surviving to reap the fruits of victory:—the other fights on, knowing that he must fall early in the battle, but content that his body should form a stepping-stone for the future conquests of humanity.”*

Adam Smith, in his *Treatise on the Theory of Moral Sentiments*, gives the following description of the “*Sapiens Stoicorum*” :—

“A wise man never complains of the destiny of Providence, nor thinks the universe in confusion when he is out of order. He does not look upon himself as a whole, separated and detached from every other part of nature, to be taken care of by itself and for itself. He regards himself in the light in which he imagines the great genius of human nature, and of the world, regards him. He enters, if I may say so, into the sentiments of that divine Being, and considers himself as an atom, a particle, of an immense and infinite system, which must and ought to be disposed of, according to the conveniency of the whole. Assured of the wisdom which directs all the events of human life, whatever lot befalls him, he accepts it with joy, satisfied that, if he had known all the connections and dependencies of the different parts of the universe, it

* *The Creed of Christendom*, pp. 236-7. In a fragment, ascribed to Clement of Rome, we are warned not to lament the tardy recompense of the just—“Οὐδεὶς γὰρ δικαίων ταχὺν καρπὸν ἔλαβεν, ἀλλ’ ἐκδέχεται αὐτόν. Εἰ γὰρ τῶν μισθῶν τῶν δικαίων ὁ Θεὸς εὐθέως ἀπέδιδου, ἐμπορίαν ἠσκοῦμεν, καὶ οὐκ εὐσεβείαν, οὐ διὰ τὸ εὐσεβῆς, ἀλλὰ τὸ κερδάλειον διώκοντες.”—*Patr. Apost. ed. Jacobsoni*, vol. 1, p. 253.

is the very lot which he himself would have wished for. If it is life, he is contented to live; and if it is death, as nature must have no further occasion for his presence here, he willingly goes where he is appointed. 'I accept,' he says, 'with equal joy and satisfaction, whatever fortune can befall me. Riches or poverty, pleasure or pain, health or sickness, all is alike: nor would I desire that the Gods should in any respect change my destination. If I was to ask of them anything beyond what their bounty has already bestowed, it should be that they would inform me before-hand what it was their pleasure should be done with me, that I might of my own accord place myself in this situation, and demonstrate the cheerfulness with which I embraced their allotment.' ”*

A comparison of these two passages is quite sufficient to show that Mr. Greg's views on this subject are nearly identical with the doctrines ascribed to the Stoical sage; and I am quite ready to admit that the stage of moral elevation to which this ideal personage has attained, is very far higher than that which has been reached by the man who is kept faithful to his duty, only by the expectation of future reward. Still, giving full credit to its exalted moral standard, there

* Part VII. *On Systems of Moral Philosophy*.—The same sentiments are embodied in the following passage, taken from the *Encheiridion* of Epictetus:—

“Αγού δέ μ', ὦ Ζεῦ, καὶ σὺ γ' ἡ Πεπρωμένη,

“Ὅποι ποθ' ὑμῖν εἰμι διατεταγμένος,

Ὡς ἔψομαί γ' ἄκνος, ἦν δὲ μὴ θέλω,

Κακὸς γενόμενος, οὐδὲν ἤττου ἔψομαι.

“Ὅς τις δ' ἀνάγκη συγκεχώρηκε καλῶς,

Σοφὸς παρ' ἡμῖν, καὶ τὰ θεῖ' ἐπίσταται.—Cap. 50.

This prayer is almost identical with Augustine's “*Da quod jubes, et jube quod vis.*” A very similar passage occurs in the Hymn of Cleanthes.

are two fatal objections to this system—it is unpractical, and it is derogatory to God.

That the theory was found impracticable by the Ancients is clear from their admission that the Sage is an abstraction, a purely ideal being.* Whether it would not be found equally impracticable with the mass of mankind at present, may be safely left to each one's experience of human nature to decide. It is true, indeed, that some few have been found,—principally among Romish devotees,—who have professed themselves willing, for the sake of their brethren, to suffer even the eternal flames of hell. But, admitting their sincerity, we must recollect that such resignation has never been tested, and is incapable of being tested.† Could the experiment be tried, say for a week, I doubt not that, by the end of it, their patience would have failed.

Now we must bear in mind that the Bible is not intended as a guide for *only* philosophers and sages,

* “Nec vero quum duo Decii, aut duo Scipiones, fortes viri commemorantur, aut quum Fabricius Aristidesve justii nominantur; aut ab illis fortitudinis, aut ab his justitiæ, tanquam a sapientibus, petitur exemplum: *nemo enim horum sic sapiens, ut sapientem volumus intelligi.* Nec ii qui sapientes habiti sunt, et nominati, M. Cato, et C. Lælius, sapientes fuerunt; ne illi quidem septem; sed ex mediorum officiorum frequentia similitudinem quamdam gerebant, speciemque sapientum.”—Cicero, *De Officiis*, Lib. iii. c. 4. The same appears also from Cotta's argument,—“Nam si stultitia, consensu omnium philosophorum, majus est malum, quam si omnia mala et fortunæ et corporis ex altera parte ponantur; *sapientiam autem nemo adsequitur*; in summis malis omnes sumus, quibus vos optume consultum a diis immortalibus dicitis.”—Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, Lib. iii. c. 32.

† We have abundance of examples of absolute resignation to the Divine Will, on the part of individuals who have clearly made up their minds that *their own persons* are safe. The prayer of such, “Grant what Thou commandest, O my God! and command whatever pleaseth Thee,” appears to be based on pretty much the same principle as the well-known adage,—*Après moi le déluge*. But the resignation above spoken of, is of a very different type.

to the heavenly kingdom, but also for poor, weak, and sinful individuals, who have no pretensions to philosophy. And we may reasonably doubt that the Stoical system would be found equal to the task. Nor is it to be forgotten that their doctrine amounts only to finite suffering on earth, *uncompensated* in another life, a fact which sufficiently distinguishes it from the theory of eternal vicarious suffering.

And that this system is derogatory to Almighty God, is equally plain. He who sows *and reaps* is a good labourer, and worthy of his hire, but I am quite ready to add, with Mr. Greg, that "he who sows what shall be reaped by others who know not and reckon not of the sower, is a labourer of a nobler order, and worthy of a loftier guerdon." But I add to this, Do not forget Who that Being is by Whom the labourer is employed. He is both infinite in *power*, and infinite in *goodness*, and whatever the labourer is "worthy of," that He will surely bestow. If the servant be, indeed, "worthy of a loftier guerdon," he shall obtain it from the hand of the Infinitely Just. Dare we deny it? Dare we say of a workman, employed by God, that he was deprived of the wages that were his due?* Surely we dare not. And, therefore, if ever, in this world, or in another, unmerited suffering is undergone, the sufferer *himself* shall infallibly receive compensation for it, at the hands of that Great Being with whom he has to do.

* In making the above remarks, I trust I shall not be misunderstood to assert that any one, by any amount of "works," could *earn* immortal life. They are intended only as a comment on the Stoical system adopted by Mr. Greg. Although I hold that no finite being can, for any sin, *deserve* such a doom as everlasting agony, I am equally clear that, even if he had done all those things which were commanded him, he would be but an unprofitable servant, having done only that which was his duty to do.

NOTE B. p. 91.

ON A FIXED STATE OUT OF TIME.

THE Rational Science of the Human Mind rewards its cultivators with no new discoveries. Though it would be far from correct to assert that it stagnates, yet the motion is cyclical, not progressive. Nomenclature changes, and thus, ostensibly, systems change also; but, when care is taken to avoid the error of confounding words with things, we find that the most recent constructive systems were anticipated by the old Greek philosophers, two thousand years ago.

Thus, with respect to the nature of Time, we, of the nineteenth century, cannot take one positive step beyond the "*si non rogas intelligo.*" When Kant denied the objective reality of both Time and Space, and maintained them to be merely subjective conditions of the Sensibility,* he obviously over-stepped his

* "Wollte man im mindesten daran zweifeln, dass beide" [Raum und Zeit] "gar keine den Dingen an sich selbst, sondern nur blossen ihrem Verhältnisse zur Sinnlichkeit anhängende Bestimmungen seyen, so möchte ich gerne wissen, wie man es möglich finden kann, *a priori*, und also vor aller Bekanntschaft mit den Dingen, ehe sie nämlich uns gegeben sind, zu wissen, wie ihre Anschauung beschaffen seyn müsse, welches doch hier der Fall mit Raum und Zeit ist. Dieses ist aber ganz begreiflich, sobald beide für nichts weiter, als formale Bedingungen unserer Sinnlichkeit, die Gegenstände aber bloss für Erscheinungen gelten, denn alsdann kann die Form der Erscheinung, d. i. die reine Anschauung, allerdings aus uns selbst, d. i. *a priori*, vorgestellt werden."—Kant, *Prolegomena zur Metaphysik*, s. 39. (Ed. Rosenkranz).

premises, which only sufficed to authorize the sceptical, or negative conclusion, that we are incapable of *affirming* their objective reality. Thus modified, the doctrine of Kant, so far as it relates to Time, is little more than a reproduction of the Scholastic *Nunc stans*—the Eternal Now. For, if Time is, in reality, merely the Form of the Sensibility, without any objective existence, the whole distinction of Past, Present, and Future, becomes an illusion—to us, indeed, a necessary illusion, but still an illusion, from which, it is certainly possible that the change of Death may set us free.

I am far, therefore, from venturing to deny the possibility of a fixed state out of Time. In fact it is difficult to reflect upon the existence of the Almighty, without, “in some dim and seeming manner,” arriving at such a conception. For, to a Being, before whose All-seeing Eye, *all* events, past, present, and to come, are manifest with *equal* clearness, such distinctions as we express by the words past and future, are altogether wanting, nor can we supply their place by anything analogous to them. Thus, in the case of the Supreme Being, we are naturally led to the conception of the Eternal Now; and it would be presumptuous to assert that the same freedom from these conditions of our sensibility, may not be the lot of creatures, higher in order than ourselves. Space and Time, then, may be regarded as *limitations*, or *restrictions*, imposed upon all human beings by their Creator’s Will. These may possibly, perhaps even probably, extend, though in very different degrees, to all orders of creatures; God alone being wholly exempt from such restraints.

Though, in consequence of our mental constitution, incapable of conceiving an *emancipation* from the fetters of Time, we are, nevertheless, able to conceive the

burthen to be materially lightened.* For example: we can conceive the faculty of Recollection to be so extraordinarily strengthened, that we should be enabled to recover, at pleasure, any past events of our own life— We may also suppose the Representative faculty to be intensified to such an extent, that the picture may, in vividness, be fully equal to the reality. And thus, so far as the past is concerned, we are able *partially* to conceive an emancipation from the condition of Time. I say *partially*, for to render it complete, even in the case of past existence, it would be necessary to conceive the simultaneous presence of a vast number of different mental states;† and this I believe to be impossible. But as for Future Time, having no faculty presentative of events in it, we are unable to frame any conception of a state in which *this* restriction would be absent: though of course such inability is not conclusive against the possibility thereof.

In a philosophical point of view, therefore, we may admit, as possible, the unreality of Time; and the

* It is obvious that a very large proportion of modern physical inventions and improvements have been nothing more than means for neutralizing, as far as possible, the limitations of Space, or Time, or both.—The locomotive, the steamer, the telescope, the microscope, the electric telegraph, are all striking instances.

† “Supposing that the mind is not limited to the simultaneous consideration of a single object, a question arises, How many objects can it embrace at once? . . . Consciousness will be at its maximum of intensity when attention is concentrated on a single object; and the question comes to be, how many several objects can the mind simultaneously survey, not with vivacity, but without absolute confusion? I find this problem stated and differently answered, by different philosophers, and apparently without a knowledge of each other. By Charles Bonnet the mind is allowed to have a distinct notion of six objects at once; by Abraham Tucker the number is limited to four; while Destutt-Tracy again amplifies it to six. The opinion of the first and last of these philosophers appears to me correct.”—Sir William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, vol. i. p. 254.

question before us is, Can any use be made of this admission, with reference to that Eternal Life which our faith bids us to hope for; and, if so, what is its use?—I fear not much. For, the doctrine of Eternal Life is intended for the creed of the million, but the unreality of Time is a purely philosophical speculation; and, to the great mass of mankind, any theory of a future life, involving such an element, can be but an empty form of words.

According to Mr. Maurice, Eternal Life is the Life of the Eternal God; Eternal Punishment is the deprivation of that Life.* By the former phrase, I presume, he means “the true knowledge of God,”—in the sense of the words in the second collect at Morning Prayer, “in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life.” And, thus understood, I have not the slightest doubt that it forms an essential component element in the complex conception of eternal life, as presented in the New Testament; an element, also, to which it is extremely important to call attention, inasmuch as it is very commonly overlooked. The passages in the first Epistle of St. John, referred to by Mr. Maurice in another publication,† show this abundantly. “Though St. John says, The life *was* manifested, and we *have* seen it, though he talks of the eternal life *abiding* in men, though he says Christ *has* come and this *is* eternal life;‡ nevertheless it is assumed as a thing too obvious to be doubted that the Apostle speaks of that which has not yet been, but is to be hereafter.” Still, admitting all this as perfectly true, the notion of endless duration is, for

* *Letter to the Lord Bishop of London*, p. 43.

† *Letter to Dr. Jelf, on the word “Eternal,”* p. 11.

‡ See 1 John, i. 2; iii. 15; v. 13; v. 20.

us, *another* constituent of the conception of Eternal Life. It is the attempt to abolish this fundamental condition of human thought, which furnishes the key to the obscurity which pervades Mr. Maurice's views as to the nature of existence after death. A man who has been to some extent habituated to metaphysical studies, may, by a stretch of thought, arrive at some faint and dim conception of eternal life as represented by him; but, to any one else, his words are little better than unmeaning. That Mr. Maurice is a firm believer in a future life I have no doubt whatever; but I could not gather it from his writings. Ignorant bigots may charge him with denying it, and denounce him as a blasphemer; but no one else will join them. In the steadiness with which he has withstood the horrible popular views respecting eternal punishment, he has done material service to Christianity. But the obscurity which *necessarily* follows an attempt to abolish Time as a component element, is, I conceive, fatal to any extensive practical benefit from his view of eternity.

Nor can I agree with him in holding that we got our conception of this eternity *as unending Time*, from John Locke.* We got it from the same source that Locke got it himself—from Common Sense, operating under the universal conditions of human thought. Imperfect and inadequate such a conception undoubtedly is—perhaps wholly illusory, if we admit the pure subjectivity of Time. Still it is the best that any of us can attain to positively; and, for the multitude, a proposition involving the abolition of Time, is but a series of sounds without meaning. An ignorant peasant understands, perfectly well, the assertion that he shall

* *Theological Essays*, p. 465.

never die, or that he shall be thrown into a fiery pit to burn for ever. But he would only stare at us if we told him that he should have "the Life of the Eternal God," or, that he should be deprived of that Life—a Life which has nothing to do with Time. Indeed, as he may never have had that Life, it is hardly right to describe eternal punishment as consisting in the *deprivation* of it. This conception of eternity can only enter the minds of the comparatively few who think; and, even for them, has only a speculative, not a practical, value.

Still, the interpretation of *αἰώνιος*, as "relating, or pertaining to God," is unaffected by such considerations. We have seen that, while eternal punishment, considered as *unending*, is wholly dependent on the meaning of this word, eternal life, also as unending, is supported by numerous different and unambiguous expressions in the New Testament; and further, we have seen that the above interpretation is in strict conformity with Biblical usage.

And the true reading in Mark, iii. 29—*ἀλλὰ ἔνοχός ἐστιν αἰωνίου ἀμαρτήματος*—affords this view a very remarkable confirmation. For what are we to understand by this "Eternal Sin"? Is it a sin which shall be punished for ever? If so, the expression, occurring where it does, is in the highest degree unnatural. If our Lord *meant* this, why did He not say so? Does it mean, on the other hand, as Alford has it, a sin which "remains unremitted for ever"? If so, the clause is a simple tautology, for the preceding words are—*οὐκ ἔχει ἄφεσιν εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα*,—so that the whole sentence would amount to this, "He hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of a sin which hath never forgiveness."

But, understanding the expression to indicate "a sin against the Eternal Being," the clause acquires a definite meaning, and is in the strictest harmony with the context. For, such a sin is exactly what the Scribes from Jerusalem were on the point of falling into. True: all sins are against God, but some sins are so, in a very different way from others. *Their* sin was sin against His Divine Nature. It was the ascription of the work of His fingers to the Captain of the hosts of hell. It was thereby generically differenced from all other forms of sin; and from this another terrible distinction flowed. Other sins may be blotted out and vanish away, but this sin hath never forgiveness, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.—A solemn warning for any one who persists in ascribing to God an act which his conscience has condemned.

NOTE C. p. 117.

ON THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS
TO THE DOGMAS OF ETERNAL PUNISHMENT
AND ETERNAL DEATH.

I HERE subjoin the principal passages from the Apostolic Fathers which refer to the future destiny of the wicked. Though fully recognizing the amazing gulf which separates their writings from the Canonical Books, and attributing but small importance to their opinions, I think these extracts are worthy of notice as indicating, to some extent, the views of the infant church on this obscure question. Though some of these so-called Apostolical Books have been undoubtedly attributed to authors by whom they were not composed, there is little doubt of their very early origin; and, for the purpose of illustrating the tenets of the primitive Christians, this is the only material point. As for the "Apocryphal Books of the New Testament," they are not only forgeries, but not very early forgeries, and therefore possess little interest.

I can only find five instances of the unambiguous mention of eternal punishment in the writings of the Apostolical Fathers. Of these, two occur in the second (spurious) Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, two, in the epistle De Martyrio Polycarpi, and one, in the epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians.—The passages are as follows:—

I. Οὐδὲν ἡμᾶς ῥύσεται ἐκ τῆς αἰωνίου κολάσεως, ἐὰν παρακούσωμεν τῶν ἐντολῶν αὐτοῦ.—2 *Clem. ad Cor.* c. vi.

II. Τῶν γὰρ μὴ τηρησάντων, φησὶν, τὴν σφραγίδα· “ὁ σκώληξ αὐτῶν οὐ τελευτήσει, καὶ τὸ πῦρ αὐτῶν οὐ σβεσθήσεται, καὶ ἔσονται εἰς ὄρασιν πάσῃ σαρκί.”—*ib.* c. vii.

III. Ignatius says of the teacher of evil doctrine,—“Ὁ τοιοῦτος εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον χωρήσει, ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ.”—*Ad. Eph.* c. xvi.

IV. In the Epistle of the Church at Smyrna, which narrates the Martyrdom of St. Polycarp, the Christian martyrs are described as—*διὰ μιᾶς ὥρας τὴν αἰώνιον κόλασιν ἐξαγοραζόμενοι.* And the fire of their cruel tormentors was cool and painless to these holy men,—*πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν γὰρ εἶχον φυγεῖν τὸ αἰώνιον καὶ μηδέποτε σβεννύμενον πῦρ.*—c. ii.

V. In the same epistle the martyr is represented as replying to the threats of the proconsul,—“πῦρ ἀπειλεῖς τὸ πρὸς ὥραν καιόμενον, καὶ μετ’ ὀλίγον σβεννύμενον· ἀγνοεῖς γὰρ τὸ τῆς μελλούσης κρίσεως καὶ αἰωνίου κολάσεως τοῖς ἀσεβέσι τηρούμενον πῦρ.”—c. xi.

To these must be added the four following passages, in which the reference to *eternal* punishment is ambiguous :

“Ἔστι γὰρ ὁδὸς τοῦ θανάτου αἰωνίου μετὰ τιμωρίας, ἐν ᾗ ἔστι τὰ ἀπολοῦντα τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτῶν.—*Barnabæ Epistola*, c. xx. This joining of “punishment” with the explicit mention of “eternal death,” renders the meaning doubtful.

The writer of the homily, commonly called the second epistle of Clement, gives the following quotation : “καὶ ὑμεῖς μὴ φοβείσθε τοὺς ἀποκτείνοντας ὑμᾶς, καὶ μηδὲν ὑμῖν δυναμένους ποιεῖν· ἀλλὰ φοβείσθε τὸν μετὰ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν ὑμᾶς ἔχοντα ἐξουσίαν ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος, τοῦ βαλεῖν εἰς γεένναν πυρός.”—c. v.

The author of the *epistle to Diognetus*, speaking of the Fire worshippers, observes—οἱ μὲν τινες πῦρ ἔφασαν εἶναι τὸν Θεὸν (οὐ μέλλουσι χωρῆσειν αὐτοί, τοῦτο καλοῦσι Θεόν).—c. viii. It is true, he does not explicitly assert unending life in this fire, but I have little doubt that the notion was in his mind.

The remaining ambiguous passage is in the same epistle: the writer, inculcating contempt for temporal suffering and death, speaks of the real death,—ὃς φυλάσσεται τοῖς κατακριθισμένοις εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον, ὃ τοὺς παραδοθέντας αὐτῷ μέχρι τέλους κολάσει.—c. x.—only for the words *μέχρι τέλους*, the meaning would be plain.

These are, I believe, the only references to eternal punishment to be found in their writings. We have seen already (p. 68.) that the sentence on Judas, twice referred to in these epistles, does not involve eternity of punishment; these references, therefore, are not to be added as additional instances.

But the passages which denounce "death," "destruction," "exclusion from the kingdom," as the penalty for sin, abound everywhere. Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp all make use of language which seems to indicate that they expected a resurrection of the just *only*.

Clement asks, Μέγα καὶ θαυμαστὸν οὖν νομίζομεν εἶναι, εἰ ὁ δημιουργὸς τῶν ἀπάντων ἀνάστασιν ποιήσεται τῶν ὁσίων αὐτῷ δουλευσάντων ἐν πεποιοθήσει πίστεως ἀγαθῆς;—1 *Cor.* c. xxvi.

Ignatius observes of those who neglected the Eucharist—Οἱ οὖν ἀντιλέγοντες τῇ δώρεῳ τοῦ Θεοῦ συζητοῦντες αποθνήσκουσιν. Συνέφερον δὲ αὐτοῖς ἀγαπᾶν, ἵνα καὶ ἀναστῶσιν.—*Ad. Smyrnaeos*, c. vii.

Polycarp teaches expressly—Ὁ δὲ ἐγείρας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν, καὶ ἡμᾶς ἐγερεῖ, ἐὰν ποιῶμεν αὐτοῦ τὸ θέλημα,

καὶ πορευόμεθα ἐν ταῖς ἐντολαῖς αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν
 ἃ ἠγάπησεν.—*Ad. Phil.* c. ii.

And again,— ϕ ἐὰν εὐαρεστήσωμεν ἐν τῷ νῦν αἰῶνι,
 ἀποληψόμεθα καὶ τὸν μέλλοντα, καθὼς ὑπέσχετο ἡμῖν
 ἐγγεῖραι ἡμᾶς ἐκ νεκρῶν.—c. v.

In all of these passages the resurrection from the dead is spoken of as *conditional* upon faith and good works.

The epistle ascribed to Barnabas, over and over again, assigns as the fate of the wicked, death, destruction, exclusion from the kingdom of the Lord. Examples of this will be found in chapters IV. VIII. X. XII. XVI. XVIII. XIX. XX. XXI.

As for the wild and fanciful *Shepherd of Hermas*,—where, as Mosheim says, “celestial spirits talk greater nonsense than hedgers and ditchers, or porters do among ourselves,”*—such expressions pervade every part of the book, and are too numerous to give even references; while no trace of the doctrine of eternal punishment is to be found therein.

We may, therefore, finally conclude that, in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, just as in the New Testament, the notices of the eternal death of the wicked overwhelm those of their eternal punishment; and hence it follows, so far as can be gathered from these early documents, that in the primitive church, belief in the former of these doctrines was of much more extensive prevalence than belief in the latter.

* *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. i. p. 100.

THE END.