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THE  
Duration and Nature  
OF  
FUTURE PUNISHMENT

BY  
HENRY CONSTABLE, A.M.,  
PREBENDARY OF CORK.

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*REPRINTED FROM THE SECOND LONDON EDITION.*

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# INTRODUCTION.

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## TO THE AMERICAN READER:

Taught from childhood, as doubtless you also have been, that all souls are possessed of immortality, and that, for the wicked ones, hell is a place of eternal torment, I ever accepted the belief, and for years have earnestly enforced it upon others. But, during a recent journey in Europe, my faith in that doctrine was staggered by the sight of the multitudes there, and at the thought of the outlying millions still of Asia and Africa, all hurrying on to God's tribunal. Can it be, that in their heedlessness and ignorance, or in their delusive strivings after pardon, they are to meet a doom such as, in its infinity of torture, the human mind could neither conceive nor endure the thought? I had learned to know somewhat of the love of God, the Creator and upholder of these lost millions; how could I reconcile that with the accepted doctrine of *unending* suffering? I did try, faithfully; even, in these struggles of the mind, writing home to a doubting Christian brother to confirm him in this belief, which I feared was slipping from under me.

Some months afterwards, a clergyman in London put into my hands the pamphlet I here offer re-printed, stating its doctrines. I replied, "Most happy would I be to accept it, if I could: but is it the doctrine of the Bible?" Carefully I read it over. The wicked, after the final judgment, ~~are~~ **to be literally destroyed** by the fiat of Him who, Christ forewarns us, "is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Upon their final death we can look with comparative calmness, though we cannot upon their protracted life in suffering. With them, in the same lake of fire, are destroyed the devil and his angels; and this consequence of sin remains an everlasting punishment, an abiding testimony to all ages of the fearfulness of sin, and so far a guarantee that God's universe shall henceforth remain as thus renovated, forever pure and holy. Nor does such a fate rob retributive justice of its peculiar terrors; for, as there is variety here in the mode of our mortal death, so may we believe of the second death. The impenitent heathen, ignorant of redeeming love, speedily perish, while a longer, more fearful doom, the many stripes of those "who knew and did not," awaits the obstinate rejecters of God's infinite grace.

This view of the future, professedly derived from the word of God, I carefully and prayerfully compared with the Scripture record. And there, as I believe, I found it; and so plainly set forth, I could but wonder that I had so long overlooked it. I had been blinded, as I believe we all are, by the idea that immortality must be a necessary attribute of every soul, and so the truth had heretofore lain concealed. But with the sweeping away of that error, a clearer light is shed upon the Holy Word itself, which I can now understand as it was written, not as it is explained for me by commentators. When Christ says, "I give unto them eternal life," and, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life," He means simply just what He says. He gives us life, a new life not possessed before, which, dating from the "new birth," runs on for a while, coexistent with, and yet not terminated with, our mortal life,—it is a literal, eternal life. Christ uses not the word in a technical "Biblical sense," so-called; he is not speaking for the Doctors of Theology, but so that we, the common people, may understand and hear him gladly. Again, when He says, "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life," he means such shall not see this life of eternity. So that, "The wages of sin IS death, the gift of God IS eternal life."<sup>1</sup>

Rejecting the traditional dogma of the soul's essential immortality, denied, it would seem, if anything can be, in the Bible,<sup>2</sup> our doubts and difficulties vanish with it. The justice of God, and the question of the origin and end of evil, no longer now need the unsatisfactory explanations of Theologic essayists—the difficulties were but of our own creation. And now, I offer to you, my Christian brother, this little pamphlet, which has brought to me so much of joy and peace: peace in the thought of the final and complete extirpation of evil from God's universe, though it be with the total destruction of the obstinate agents of evil; joy, in its vindication of the power, justice and goodness of our Heavenly Father. Will you not, for the truth's sake, thoughtfully study its presentation of doctrine in the light of God's authoritative record? Think not of it as a willful attempt to "pervert the right ways of the Lord." The simple question is—Is it, or is it not, according to God's Holy Word? You will perceive that this doctrine establishes that gradation in future punishment which is taught by Revelation and reason, in this differing from the views of those Annihilationists, (so-called,) who hold to the immediate destruction of evil doers.

A candid, not dogmatic and bitter, review of the grounds of our belief regarding future punishment is greatly needed at the present day. I speak for the laymen as one of them, and I know also, that not a few of our devout and thoughtful clergymen have serious difficulties on this point. Hear this testimony from that well-known preacher and Bible expositor,

<sup>1</sup> Romans, vi. 23.

<sup>2</sup> For example, 1 Tim. vi. 16  
Rom. ii. 7.

Rev. Albert Barnes. Speaking of sin's entrance into the world, and of that eternity of suffering he felt constrained to teach, he declares :

"These are *real*, not imaginary difficulties. \* \* I confess, for one, I feel them, and feel them the more sensibly and powerfully the more I look at them, and the longer I live. \* \* I do not know that I have a ray of light on this subject, which I had not when the subject first flashed across my soul. I have read, to some extent, what wise and good men have written. I have looked at their various theories and explanations. I have endeavored to weigh their arguments, for my whole soul pants for light and relief on these questions. But I get neither; and in the distress and anguish of my own spirit, I confess that I see no light whatever. I see not one ray to disclose to me the reason why sin came into the world; why the earth is strewed with the dying and the dead, and why man must suffer to all eternity. I have never seen a particle of light thrown on these subjects that has given a moment's ease to my tortured mind. \* \* It is all dark—dark—dark, to my soul, and I cannot disguise it." <sup>1</sup>

"In the midst of this gloom," as he styles it, Mr. Barnes comforts himself with the belief that, it must be that the Judge of all the earth will do right, though appearances are so much against it; it seeming never to occur to him that his own theology, and not the revealed truth, is here at fault. Others of our religious teachers live on in silence, seeking relief from these felt difficulties in a smothered hope in universal salvation, or at least a final restoration of the wicked, or else they fancy a probation beyond the grave: in either case failing to give decided utterance of that future woe, so solemnly enforced by the Great Preacher.

But so far from any tendency to affiliation with Universalists, as insinuated by a recent theological reviewer,<sup>2</sup> this doctrine is diametrically opposed to theirs, more so than is the popular theory which agrees with Universalism, in upholding the error common to both, that "every soul is immortal." That dogma, if you will but recognise it, is the original lie of our sinful world. It was first uttered in Eden when Satan declared to our tempted parents, "Ye shall not surely die;" in the same words is it repeated by the Universalist of our day; and it is repeated still, though it be unwittingly and in other words, by every orthodox religious teacher, when he proclaims, "Ye shall live forever in your sins!" Against both these forms of deception our doctrine opposes itself alike, declaring in the words of the Master, "Ye shall *die* in your sins, if ye believe not on the Son of God."<sup>3</sup> What possibility for Universal Salvation, what hope for a future pardon, when the soul is forever literally destroyed? It was to take away this last refuge of the unregenerate soul, that our gracious Lord so fully and unequivocally foretells everlasting punishment—eternal death! And yet in spite of all, the arch-deceiver has for centuries persuaded the Christian Church that his lie was not so far from truth; that though all men die out

<sup>1</sup> Practical Sermons by Albert Barnes, (Lindsay & Blakiston, Phila: 1860.) first published, 1841.

<sup>2</sup> Life and Death Eternal, by S. C. Bartlett, D.D.

<sup>3</sup> John viii. 24.



of this world, yet they are all hereafter to live to all eternity. And out of this again has grown that Romish falsehood of purgatory. Sad that our Protestant forefathers, when they took their stand upon the Bible, and rejected the many errors of a corrupted church, had not also recognized and rejected this early device of the Old Serpent! That immortality thus asserted of all men, our doctrine restricts to those to whom Christ gives it: while that scripture-promised restitution of all things, the seeming glory of Universalism, but the stumbling block of the popular theory, it makes evident as fully accomplished in the final destruction of all evil doers.

In this connection, and in cheering contrast to those sad words of the Philadelphia divine, let me quote from the author of this pamphlet, in his preface:

“For myself, I cannot express my sense of the value I place on the view I now seek to impress on others. It has for me thrown a light on GOD’s character, and GOD’s word, and the future of His world, which I once thought I should never have seen on this side of the grave. It has not removed the wholesome and necessary terrors of the Lord from the mind, but it has clothed GOD with a loveliness which makes Him, and the Eternal Son who represents Him to man, incalculably more attractive. I am no longer looking for shifts to excuse his conduct in my own eyes and those of others, and forced to feel that here at least I could never find one to answer my object. I can look at all that He has done, and all He tells me He will hereafter do, and, scanning it closely, and examining it even where it has most of awe and severity, exclaim with all my heart and with all my understanding—“Just and true are Thy ways, thou King of Saints.”

In conclusion, I may state that this question of Future Punishment, has been of late freely discussed in the Religious Magazines of England; and I am informed that a large proportion of the intelligent and devout English clergymen, of all denominations, accept the truth of the views herein stated. The agitation on this subject has not reached our shores, at least not fully as yet, but it must be met; and the sooner the truth prevails the better, for the glory of God, and for our common Christianity.

C. L. IVES.

NEW HAVEN, CONN., *February*. 1871.



THE  
DURATION AND NATURE  
OF  
FUTURE PUNISHMENT.

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CHAPTER I

*FUTURE PUNISHMENT IS ETERNAL.*

FUTURE PUNISHMENT for the sins of the present life is universally allowed to be taught in Scripture; but, with respect to its nature and duration, very opposite opinions have been and are maintained, as being each of them the doctrine of God's Word. We speak only of punishment to be inflicted subsequent to the Judgment. With the condition of the soul in its separate state in Hades we have here nothing to do.

There are three main opinions relative to this punishment. One of these makes it to be essentially of a *purgative nature*, to be temporary in its duration, and to have as its issue the restoration of all to God's favor and eternal happiness. This was the opinion of Origen. The second is that which has long been most commonly received. It makes punishment to be eternal in its duration, and supposes it to consist in *an eternal life* spent in misery and pain. This was the theory of Augustine. According to the third opinion, punishment is also eternal, but *death, i. e. the loss of life*, is its essence, attended and preceded by such various degrees of pain as a just and merciful God, for wise reasons, sees fit to inflict. The third of these opinions is the one here maintained. Its establishment will of course set aside the others. Its eternal duration will overthrow that of Origen; its character, involving a state of death, will overthrow alike that of Origen and Augustine. We

rest its proof on the express, oft-repeated, and harmonious testimony of Scripture, and on arguments drawn from that character of God which He has given of Himself in His Word.

With respect to the eternity of future punishment we will be brief. To us it has always appeared that, as clearly as Holy Scripture teaches that there will be punishment, with the same clearness it teaches that punishment to be eternal—without end. We will give the chief grounds on which we rest our opinion.

In the first place its duration is described in the very same terms as the life of the redeemed. ‘These,’ saith Christ, speaking of the reprobate, ‘shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.’<sup>1</sup> Here the same Greek word<sup>2</sup> is used for the duration of these opposite states. If, as almost all allow, it means eternal in the case of the righteous, it surely must mean so in that of the wicked. How absurd would such a translation as this be—‘These shall go away into punishment which is not eternal; but the righteous into life which is eternal!’

Again, our Lord has repeatedly declared that there are persons who, at no time and under no change of dispensation, shall have forgiveness: ‘Whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.’<sup>3</sup> This is wholly inconsistent with the idea that such persons should, after any period of punishment, enter into the peace of God.

What Christ has here said of one class of sinners He has said elsewhere in equally strong language of all who reject Him: ‘He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.’<sup>4</sup> If, after a certain purgation, such men passed from a state of punishment into one of happiness, these words of Christ—we say it with all reverence—would not and could not be true; for such men would see life, on such men the wrath of God would not abide.

Again, there are persons of whom our Lord affirms that it would have been better for them if they had not been born.<sup>5</sup> Such an affirmation is incompatible with the idea that they should, after a punishment of any conceivable length, enter upon the life of bliss. The first moment of release would make amends for all past suffering; throughout eternity they would praise God that they had been born.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxv. 46.

<sup>2</sup> ———aionios.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xii. 31; Luke xii. 10.

<sup>4</sup> John iii. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Matt. xxvi. 24, Mark xiv. 21.

For these and other reasons we are persuaded that punishment will be of an eternal duration. The Judgment once passed, God holds out no hope beyond. Man now makes his choice of one or other of two conditions, each of which will be alike eternal.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *ETERNAL DEATH.*

IN WHAT will the eternal state of the lost consist? That is now our question. We hold that it does not consist in an eternal life spent in pain of body, or remorse of mind, but that a state of utter death and destruction is that state which abides for ever. The length of time which this process of dissolution may take, and the degrees of bodily or mental pain which may precede and produce it, are questions which we must leave to that providence of God which will rule in hell as in heaven. One thing, however, we may with certainty gather. It is that the process of dissolution will afford scope for that great variety of punishment which the reprobate will suffer hereafter, from that which in its justice is terrible to that which, with equal justice, is scarcely felt at all.

We need not stop to argue that, between this view of punishment and that which maintains an eternal existence in pain, there is no comparison. The present life shows us this. When hope has ceased to cheer its future men willingly lay it aside for death; when pain has made it a weary burden, the friends of the sufferer thank God for its termination. 'Better not to be than to live in misery,' was the judgment of Sophocles, and we ever find the wretched, when suffering has become excessive, calling upon death as upon a friend.<sup>1</sup> So the close of each agonized life in hell would be longed for there; would send a thrill of relief through the inhabitants of heaven.<sup>2</sup>

It may be well to say a few words on the reasons which have from a very ancient period led a majority of Christians, as from a period still more ancient they led the majority of the Jewish Church, to hold the doctrine of an eternal life of pain, as it

<sup>1</sup> Job iii. 21; Jer. viii. 3; Rev. ix. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* i. 43.



will be requisite to show that one of these reasons is without foundation, before we proceed to the establishment of our own view. It will be seen that this same reason led another class of minds with a like irresistible force to the other great error here controverted, viz: Universal Restoration.

Before the preaching of the Gospel the highest order of heathen philosophy had framed for its satisfaction a theory of the immortality of the soul. While far the greater number taught<sup>1</sup> that death was for all, sooner or later, an eternal sleep, there were 'high spirits of old' that strained their eyes to see beyond the clouds of time the dawning of immortality. Unable, as we are able, to connect it with God as its source, and with his promise as our assurance, they framed the idea of an immortality self-existing in the soul itself. Plato, in his 'Phædo,' has given us the marvellous reasoning of Socrates, and Cicero has exhibited the argument in his 'Tusculan Questions.' According to it, the soul is possessed of an inherent immortality. It is of necessity eternal. It could have no end: no death. What was true of one soul was true of all souls alike, whether good or bad. They must live somewhere, be it in Tartarus, or Cocytus, in Pyriphlegethon, or the happy abodes of the purified. This sublime philosophical idea passed readily and early into the theology of the Christian Church. We find it running throughout the reasoning of Athenagoras and Tertullian, of Origen and Augustine.<sup>2</sup> Heedless of Paul's warning voice<sup>3</sup> against philosophy, they became the feeble apes of Plato. They applied their theology, as he his philosophy, to all souls alike—to those of the reprobate as of the redeemed. They taught that the life of the former must be as eternal as that of the latter.

A moment's reflection will show us that a dogma of this kind could not remain idle. It *must* influence most powerfully in one direction or in another this whole question of future punishment. It *must* mould the entire doctrine of the Church upon the subject. According as men connected it with one truth of Scripture or another, it must give rise to two different and opposite schools of thought. Connect the immortality of the soul with the Scrip-

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," chap. xv. 11. Cicero, Tusc. Disp. i. 31. Justin Martyr. Apol. ii. p. 91. Ed. Paris, 1615.

<sup>2</sup> Athenagoras, p. 31 A. 53 D. Edition: Justin Martyr, Paris, 1615. Tertullian, De Anima. Paris, 1675; Origen, vol. i. 486 B.; Vol. ii. 108 C. E. Ed. Rothomagi, 1668; Augustine, Civ. Dei, xxi. 3. Antwerp, 1760.

<sup>3</sup> Col. ii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 22, iii, 19; 1 Tim. vi. 28.



tural doctrine of the eternity of punishment, and you inevitably create the dogma of eternal life in misery, *i.e.* of *Augustine's hell*. Connect it with the other great truth of Scripture, the final extinction of evil and restoration of all things, and you as inevitably create *Origen's Universal Restoration*. For each of these opposing theories there is exactly the same amount of proof, viz: Plato's dogma and a dogma of the Bible; and, if Plato's dogma could be proved to be a Scriptural doctrine, then by every law of logic Scripture would be found supporting two distinct and absolutely contradictory theories.

Accordingly, this philosophical idea of Plato is found pervading and influencing the interpretation of Scripture from the second century down to our own day. The Fathers, as a general rule, considered the question of future punishment under the impression that every soul of man was immortal. It is true, indeed, that none of them, unless, perhaps, Origen and a few of his disciples, attached to the soul the idea of an essential immortality and an existence from all eternity, as Plato did. They generally acknowledged it as the creation of God, having a beginning in time, and would doubtless have allowed, if asked, that He who had given it existence could take that existence away. But in supposing that God gave to the soul at its creation *an inalienable immortality, i.e.* an immortality not affected by any conduct upon man's part, of which no creature could deprive it, and of which God would not deprive it, they in effect laid down a dogma which had the very same influence upon their views of future punishment as if they had adopted the dogma of Plato to its fullest extent. An immortality that never would be taken from the soul, and an immortality that could not be taken from it, would have precisely the same bearing upon the future of man: in either case man must live on for ever, whether in misery or in happiness. In a subsequent chapter we will show the actual influence of this dogma upon the doctrine of the Church, leading first to Augustine's fearful theory of everlasting misery, and then, in the revulsion of human thought from this, to Origen's theory of universal restoration. We here merely note the fact that the dogma of the inalienable immortality of the human soul was from a very early period of the Christian Church accepted generally as true.

Now the immortality of the soul, whether as held by Plato, by Origen, or by the Fathers in general, was a mere fancy of the human mind. As to any essential immortality which belonged

to it of its own proper nature, in all probability there is not a single Christian writer or thinker who would be found to maintain it. It was, as Pliny justly called it, a figment; and even Socrates, with all his noble longings, with all his subtle reasonings, seems to have feared that after all his favorite notion was no sounder than the figment which the Epicurean contemptuously called it.<sup>1</sup> Scripture denies it altogether. An essential immortality it does not allow to be the attribute of any creature, however exalted in its origin. To one Being only—to God—does it allow to have life in Himself: of one Being only—God—does it allow such an immortality to be an attribute.<sup>2</sup> Here, as in everything else, Scripture is the book of the highest reason. That which has had a beginning may have an end. That on which God has bestowed life He may and can inflict death. The highest intelligences as much as the lowest must depend on Him for the continuance of their life. Let Him withdraw his sustaining power and the mighty archangel becomes a thing of nought, as completely as the insect which dances in the sunbeams for an hour and then passes away for ever.

The idea that God has bestowed upon men, or upon any part of human nature, an inalienable immortality finds just as little sanction in the Scriptures. The expression 'immortality of the soul,' so common in theology, is not once found in the Bible from beginning to end. In vain do men, bent on sustaining a human figment, ransack Scripture for some expressions which may be tortured into giving it some apparent countenance. The phrase, 'living soul,' applied to man at his creation,<sup>3</sup> has been by many Christian writers, ignorant of Hebrew, supposed to imply such an immortality.<sup>4</sup> A slight acquaintance with the original language of the Old Testament would have shown these writers, ancient and modern, that the very same phrase had been applied *to the lower creation* before it was applied to man.<sup>5</sup> The three-fold description of man, as having body, soul and spirit, has been by others supposed significant of his inalienable immortality. Whatever be meant by this distinction, it cannot in any measure support the inference based upon it, as the lower creatures are allowed in Scripture to be possessed not merely of body and soul but of spirit likewise.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pliny's Nat. Hist. vii. 56. "Apology of Socrates," c. 32 and 33.

<sup>2</sup> John v. 26; 1 Tim. vi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ii. 7.

<sup>4</sup> 'Religious Tendencies of the Times,' By James Grant, v. ii., p. 136. Theophilus of Ant. 97 c. Justin Martyr's Works.

<sup>5</sup> Gen. i. 20-21.

<sup>6</sup> Gen. vii. 22; Eccl. iii. 19-21.

But an *inalienable* immortality is expressly asserted in Scripture *not* to have been bestowed upon man at his creation.<sup>1</sup> We do not deny that man was made in God's image, and that a very important part of this resemblance consisted in man's not being subject to death as the lower creatures were. Immortality *was* given to man at his creation. This priceless gift was one of the gifts which a bountiful Creator bestowed upon a favored creature. *But it was alienable.* It might be parted with: it might be thrown away: it might be lost. So He, the Lawgiver said, when in giving immortality He also added the warning, 'in the day thou eatest thou shalt die.' What is more, *this immortality was alienated; this priceless gift was thrown away and lost.* Man sinned and lost his immortality. Man made in the image of God lost the image. So God said when to fallen Adam He declared, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.'<sup>2</sup> *Sinful* man is not by nature immortal but mortal. He has lowered himself to the level of the beasts that perish. If immortality is to be his again it must be *as a gift restored and not inherited.* It must become his by virtue of some new provision of grace, which reinstates him in the place he lost. *This was the Gospel of Christ.* It was to give the eternal life which man had forfeited that He came into the world; but subsequent examination will show us that He does not bestow this priceless gift on all, but on some only of the fallen race.<sup>3</sup>

Before we proceed to establish our view of future punishment by the direct testimony of Scripture, it will be necessary to remove an objection very commonly made to it, and which has great force with very many minds. We allow that it has great apparent force. It had such with us for many years, and we cannot wonder that it has such with others. We are persuaded that if this objection is removed the grand objection with many devout and holy minds will be taken away. The objection is this, *that what is no longer felt to be punishment by the party who is punished is no punishment at all;* that it ceased to be a punishment the moment it ceased to be sensibly felt. This was one of Tertullian's chief reasons for his view of eternal misery.<sup>4</sup> He reasoned precisely as those heathen reasoned who, in trying to reconcile man to his inevitable fate, tried to reason him into the belief that death was no evil.<sup>5</sup> Yet when such men looked on into the limitless future, into that endless life which the human

<sup>1</sup> Gen. ii. 17.<sup>2</sup> Gen. iii. 19.<sup>3</sup> John v. 24, 40.<sup>4</sup> Tertullian, De Res. xxxv.; Lucretius, b. iii.<sup>5</sup> Cicero, Tusc. Disp. i. 36, 37.



mind can conceive and long to make its own, they corrected their former reasoning and, without the Christian's promise of eternal life in Christ, called endless death an *endless injury*.<sup>1</sup> Such it is even to him who has ceased to feel the loss of life, and, since the life restored to man through Christ is an eternal life, it follows that its loss, inflicted as a punishment, is also an eternal punishment.

And here the first death affords a perfect analogy to the second. From the earliest records of our race capital punishment has been reckoned as not only the greatest, but also the most lasting of all punishment, and it is only reckoned the greatest because it is the most lasting. A flogging inflicted on a petty thief inflicts more actual pain than decapitation or hanging inflicts upon a murderer. Why is it thus reckoned? Because it has deprived the sufferer of every hour of that life which but for it he would have had.<sup>2</sup> *Its duration is supposed co-existent with the period of his natural life.* 'The laws,' says Augustine, 'do not estimate the punishment of a criminal by the brief period during which he is being put to death, but by their removing him for ever from the company of living men.'<sup>3</sup>

The conclusion drawn from this is sometimes sought to be got rid of by representing the real punishment of death to consist in its exposing the party put to death to those sufferings which are supposed to follow death in the world of spirits. But whether such sufferings do or do not at once follow death, it is quite plain that such is not the consideration which has impressed upon the human mind its abiding sense, that in inflicting death upon criminals the greatest and most lasting of punishment has been inflicted. For this idea has not been confined to Christian nations, or to believers in a future life of rewards and punishments, but was accepted before the time of the Gospel, and by men and nations who did not believe in a future life at all. Herod the Sadducee, Pliny the Epicurean, Confucius, followed in his hopeless creed by nearly one-half of the human family, represent this impression of the human mind.

Now this is readily applied to the future life and to future punishment. The loss of every year of the life which the sinner might have had but for his sin is a punishment, and because the life is eternal the punishment is eternal also. There is here no straining of argument to make out a case. The argument is one which man's judgment has in every age approved as just,

<sup>1</sup> Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* i. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.* i. 24.

<sup>3</sup> *De Civ. Dei.* xxi. 11.

and which, as applied to the future punishment of the ungodly, is allowed to be just alike by those who believe that it will consist in eternal death, and by those who believe that it will consist in an eternal life of misery.<sup>1</sup>

And in arguing thus we have confined our attention to the parties actually punished, while we have left out of sight the grand object of all wise punishment, viz: the lesson taught by it to those who have not offended. Now, viewed in this light, eternal death inflicted on sinners *is eternally felt*, and has an eternal influence on the parties whom it was intended principally to affect. The actual sinner suffered as he deserved—if not less, certainly not more. His death, then, intervenes to afford its eternal lesson to all future times. They who rejoice in immortality are for ever warned by the aspect of its loss. Milton draws the fallen angels as shuddering at the thought of the loss even of their life—lowered—shattered—with no aim or object but evil:—

To be no more: sad cure; for who would lose,  
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,  
These thoughts that wander through eternity?

How much more terrible must the thought be to those whose life is synonymous with joy!

A vast amount of misconception, and consequently of needless controversy, has arisen from the mistaken idea that eternal death is not properly eternal punishment. One class of reasoners, holding eternal punishment, think it necessary to argue against eternal death as not being its equivalent; while another class, holding more or less the doctrine of eternal death, feel bound to argue against the eternity of future punishment, from not perceiving that the eternal death which they hold is in truth its full equivalent. One class, again, imagines that in proving eternal punishment they have proved eternal life in torment, and the other that, in overthrowing the notion of the latter, they have overthrown the former also.<sup>2</sup>

We will here merely add that the term 'Eternal Death,' taken by us as properly descriptive of the theory of the future destruction and non-existence of the wicked, is the very term used by the best writers of the periods before and after the birth of Christ, when they would describe the eternal loss of life and

<sup>1</sup> Irenæus, v. 27. Witsius on the Covenants, i. v. xlii. <sup>2</sup> 'Eternity of Future Punishment,' G. Salmon, D. D., p. 1, &c. 'Eternal Punishment,' J. W. Barlow, M. A., p. 4, &c. Religious Tendencies of the Times,' J. Grant, vol. i. 263, &c.



existence to beings who had once possessed it. Lucretius calls it 'Immortal Death:' Cicero calls it 'Everlasting Death:' even Tertullian, though his theory compelled him to confound death with life, when he would describe a state from which there was no resurrection to life, can find no stronger truer description of it than 'Eternal Death.'<sup>1</sup>

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## CHAPTER III.

### TESTIMONY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

HAVING in our last chapter removed all obstacles arising from an erroneous notion of the nature of the soul, we proceed to consider the direct proofs of our view. We will first advert to the testimony of the Old Testament. This is indeed by no means so clear, either as to the future of the redeemed or lost, as the New Testament, but there are undoubtedly many places not only in its later but in its earlier portions which speak of both.<sup>2</sup>

We will first advert to the original conception of *Death*. It was very early spoken of by God Himself. 'In the day that thou eatest' of the tree of knowledge, He said to Adam, 'thou shalt surely die.'<sup>3</sup> We must remember that death was the law of the lower creation, as both Scripture and Geology testify, and therefore its idea and nature were already known to Adam as consisting in the loss of life. Accordingly, God does not, when he named to Adam the penalty of sin, explain its nature, which otherwise He must have done. But after Adam had sinned, God in other words defines the penalty, and shows that death in man's case was the same thing as in the case of the brutes—'dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.'<sup>4</sup> God's definition of the the death inflicted for the first transgression is frequently repeated in different language in the later Scriptures. Thus Paul tells us it is the death which all men undergo, whether they are among the saved or the lost.<sup>5</sup> Such, too, was that death which Christ endured for human sin—the death which the thieves beside Him suffered—'even the death of

<sup>1</sup> 'Mors immortalis,' Lucretius, iii. 'Mors sempiternum malum.' Cicero, Tusc. Disp. i. 42. 'Eternus interitus,' Tertullian, De Res. ix. 231, ed. Lut. Paris, 1667.

<sup>2</sup> Acts iii. 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. ii. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. iii. 19

<sup>5</sup> Rom. v. 12, 14, 17; 1 Cor. xv. 22.

the cross.<sup>1</sup> We have thus the original meaning of death clearly and explicitly displayed in Scripture. It did not mean life spent in pain, but the loss of the life which God first gave to man in Eden. Such was man's primitive idea of death. Such was the universal idea formed of it wherever man lived and died. It is accordingly the primary, often the only, meaning of the word 'death' in every language of the earth.

Language, we know, assumes a variety of meaning. Words sometimes undergo so many subtle changes of sense that their latter meaning becomes the direct opposite to their first. The word Death, however, has remained true to its original in its various applications. Thus we have in Scripture the expressions 'dead to sin,' 'dead to the law:' in our Catechism we have the phrase 'a death unto sin:' in ordinary life we speak of persons as being dead to certain passions or affections. All such expressions are derived from physical death, and are true to its original sense. They imply the departure and non-existence of relations and feelings which once were living and strong—*their death*. To the sense imposed on death in all times and by all nations there is one exception, that given to it *in the theology of a portion of Christendom*. Compelled by a terrific creed of punishment, Death is made to mean its direct opposite—'Life'—some 'Condition of being' or existence.<sup>2</sup>

But this late meaning attached by many Christians to the term 'death' in one of its applications, namely, to future punishment, has not the smallest force as regards its use in the Old Testament. There the word must be taken in the sense stamped upon it and unaltered. There it is over and over again described as the end in the future world of obstinate transgressors. For such God declares He has 'provided the instruments of death:' of such as hate divine wisdom that wisdom says 'they that hate me *love death*:' to the wicked God saith 'thou shalt surely die:' 'the soul that sinneth it shall die.'<sup>3</sup>

No one, we suppose, will apply such expressions to that death which all alike undergo as the children of Adam. They can only apply to future punishment. Death, then, is according to the Old Testament, to be after judgment the result of sin, as life is the result of righteousness. Can we suppose a God of truth, of justice, and of mercy, to mean by this well-un-

<sup>1</sup> Phil. ii. 8; Acts ii. 24; Rom. v. 7, 8. <sup>2</sup> Rainbow for 1869, p. 254; Religious Tendencies, J. Grant, ii. 141. <sup>3</sup> Ps. vii. 13; Prov. viii. 36; xi. 4; Ezek. iii. 18; xviii. 4; xxxiii. 8.

derstood phrase something unknown to his hearers, of a character the very opposite to what they had from his own teaching conceived, and conveying a doom unutterably greater? The very idea is an insult to God. God speaks to men in the language of men. But hence it follows as a matter of course that loss of life is the doom pronounced against sinners in the Old Testament.

But it is not only by this phrase, 'death,' that the Old Testament describes the punishment of the ungodly. By every expression in the Hebrew language significant of loss of life, loss of existence, the resolution of organized substance into its original parts, its reduction to that condition in which it is as though it had never been called into being,—by every such expression does the Old Testament describe the end of the ungodly. 'The destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together:' 'prepare them for the *day of slaughter*:' 'the slain of the Lord shall be many:' 'they shall go forth and look upon the *carcasses* of the men that have sinned:' 'God shall *destroy* them:' 'they shall be *consumed*:' 'they shall be *cut off*:' 'they shall be rooted *out of the land of the living*:' 'blotted out of the *book of life*:' 'they are not.'<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew scholar will see from the above passages that there is no phrase of the Hebrew language significant of all destruction short of that philosophical annihilation of elements which we do not assert which is not used to denote the end of the ungodly.

For the benefit of the English reader we will present instances of the meaning of some of these phrases in things which relate to this present life. There are several Hebrew words applied to future punishment translated by the word 'perish.' Abad is one of the most common of these. When Heshbon was utterly cut off by the sword of Israel: when a sentence of extermination was pronounced against the house of Ahab: when the memory of the wicked has departed from the earth: when Esther apprehends her death at the hands of Ahasuerus: it is this word which is used: they have, or will, or may perish.<sup>2</sup> Hāras is another term in frequent use for future punishment. What is its meaning in common life? When the altar of Baal was thrown down, stone after stone: when the strongholds of Zion were levelled to the ground: when a wall is broken down so that its foundations are discovered: this is the term used.<sup>3</sup> Again:

<sup>1</sup> Is. i. 23; lxvi. 16, 24; Jer. xii. 3; Ps. xxviii. 5; xxxvii. 20; lxxiii. 27; xxxvii. 38; lii. 5; lxix. 23; Job xxvii. 19. <sup>2</sup> Numb. xxi. 30; 2 Kings ix. 8; Job xviii. 17; Esth. iv. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Judges vi. 25; Lam. ii. 2; Ezek. xiii. 14.



God will 'destroy' the ungodly. One Hebrew word for this is Tsāmāth. It is used in the sense of utterly cutting off and destroying from a place.<sup>1</sup> Another Hebrew word is Shāmād. It is significant of utter extinction. When the women of the tribe of Benjamin had been slain; when the nations of Canaan disappeared before the sword of Israel: when Moab ceased to be a nation: this is the word used for their destruction.<sup>2</sup> Again: the wicked will be 'cut off.' The Hebrew is Kārath in Nifal. What is its use in common life? When truth has become extinct from a sin-loving people: when weapons of war are broken in pieces: when life at the period of the flood perished from off the earth: when the life of an offender against the law of Moses was taken: this is the word used: '*they are cut off.*'<sup>3</sup> By another word, Nāthats, God threatens future destruction. In matters of this life it indicates destruction of an utter kind. When the infected house of the leper was cast down and dismantled: when the images of Baal were broken in pieces: when the stones of the altar of the sun were ground into powder: this is the word used for the process of destruction.<sup>4</sup>

To one or two individual texts we will afterwards more particularly refer, as well as to its illustrations of future punishment; but we need here go no further in order to ascertain the clear, distinct, oft-repeated testimony of the Old Testament. By every unambiguous term it has pointed out the punishment of the wicked as consisting, not in life, but in the loss of life,—not in their continuance in that organized form which constitutes man, but in its dissolution, its resolution into its original parts, its becoming as though it had never been called into existence. While the redeemed are to know a life which has no end, the lost are to be reduced to a death which knows of no awaking for ever and ever. Such is the testimony of the Old Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxi. 4; ci. 5-8. <sup>2</sup> Judges xxi. 16; Deut. xii. 30; Jer. xlviii. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. vii. 28; Zech. ix. 10; Gen. ix. 11; Ex. xxx. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Lev. xiv. 45; 2 Kings xi. 18; xxxiii. 12.



## CHAPTER IV.

*TESTIMONY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.*

WE NOW turn to the New Testament. We shall find it in perfect agreement with the Old. Before, however, bringing forward its statements, we will make a few observations on a new feature here introduced, viz: the change of language adopted in the publication of the Gospel Revelation.

We remark, then, that the writers of the New Testament not only must be supposed to follow the sense already fixed on the terms expressive of future punishment in the Hebrew Scriptures, but that they also give us another guarantee as to their meaning by their usage of the Greek tongue. The Gospel, revealed and recorded chiefly by Jews, is recorded, not in a provincial dialect, but in the language of the Roman World. We have here a guarantee as to their meaning, whose overpowering force on the present question we will show a little further on. Paul, and Luke, and John, and Peter use a language which they had no hand in forming or moulding, but which was already provided for them to be the vehicle of their thoughts. They made no claim to alter the world's tongue, but to alter the faith of the world through the medium of that tongue which the world used and understood when they were children, learning the meaning of its words from their elders.<sup>1</sup> The ordinary Greek Lexicon, not lexicons of the New Testament, colored and tainted by theological opinion, is the true guide to the Greek of the New Testament. It is only where an idea new to the human mind is brought before it that we have a right to look for a new or modified phrase, whose sense is to be stamped upon it by the teachers of the novel truth. Neither a future life, nor judgment and punishment to come, were ideas novel to man. Heathen poetry and prose perpetually discussed them before the preaching of the Gospel.

We will first draw attention to the fact that the punishment of the wicked is just as frequently described *as their death* in the New Testament as in the Old, without the smallest effort to show that its terms 'death,' or 'to die,' have any new sense

<sup>1</sup> Discussions on the Gospels. By Rev. A. Roberts, M. A., pp. 35-42.

placed upon them.<sup>1</sup> These words, as all other words on this question, are used without any explanation, as words whose sense was long established. Thus our Lord, speaking of Himself, says, 'This is the bread which came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and *not die*.' and again He says, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall *never die*.'<sup>2</sup> In these passages He implies that they who do not believe in Him *shall die*. What our Lord implies of the ungodly, Paul affirms of them: 'If ye live after the flesh *ye shall die*.'<sup>3</sup> Very frequently repeated are the passages in which the expression '*death*' is used for future punishment. Thus our Lord says, 'If a man keep my sayings he shall never see death.' Paul affirms of wicked works that their '*end is death*,' that '*the wages of sin is death*:' of those who perish he says that to such '*we are the savour of death unto death*.' James declares that '*sin when finished bringeth forth death*:' and that '*he which converteth a sinner shall save a soul from death*.' John declares that the ungodly shall suffer '*the second death*.'<sup>4</sup> We have thus, in repeated places, death described as the lot of the wicked in the life to come, nor is there in any one of them the least attempt made to show that death had any other than its usual sense, viz: *loss of life*.

As we proceed in our examination of the New Testament we will find ourselves confirmed in our view. To '*the second death*' we have given the usual meaning of '*loss of life hereafter*,' as death now means the loss of life here. We will proceed to show that such is the meaning which the New Testament itself imposes on the term. Its uniform testimony is that '*eternal life*' hereafter will be the exclusive possession of the just, and that the wicked will certainly not obtain it:<sup>5</sup> 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life.' Our simple enquiry is, what is meant by that Greek word<sup>6</sup> translated '*life*' in the passages referred to. Our Lord in addressing Himself to the Jewish people, Luke in writing a Gospel for the Gentile world, Paul in writing to Rome, the metropolis of heathenism, or Corinth priding itself on its Grecian tongue, James, Peter, and Jude writing to Christians wherever scattered over the earth, all alike use this word as universally understood. We have only,

<sup>1</sup> Thanatos, Apothnesko.    <sup>2</sup> John vi. 50; xi. 26    <sup>3</sup> Rom. viii. 13.    <sup>4</sup> John viii. 51; Rom. vi. 21-23; 2 Cor. ii. 16; James i. 15, v. 20; Rev. xx. 14.    <sup>5</sup> Matt. xix. 29; John iii. 36; Rom. ii. 7, v. 21; James i. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 7.    <sup>6</sup> Zoe.

therefore, to refer to our classical dictionaries, and there we find its primary and universally accepted sense to be *existence*. If we want any further confirmation, let us listen to the Apostle James defining its meaning: '*What is your life?*' *It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.*'<sup>1</sup> On the classical usage, and the express definition of the New Testament, we take our stand. Dictionaries of the New Testament, and commentators on it, may, if they please, put upon the phrase the sense of '*happiness*' in the numberless passages where it occurs, but we deny to them the right to alter the meaning of a well understood Grecian word for the sake of bolstering up their baseless and horrid creed.

There is another Greek word<sup>2</sup> constantly translated 'life,' in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> With respect to this word one thing is certain; that it does not bear in classical dictionaries, nor even in dictionaries of the New Testament so far as we know, that sense of '*happiness*,' which these latter have sought to impose upon the term before referred to. Another thing is equally certain, that in passages where this word can only mean 'life,' *i. e.* 'animal life,' such as we share with the lower creation, this life it is expressly declared shall be lost hereafter by the ungodly. Let us consider one such passage. In Matt. x. 39 our Lord declares, '*He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*' What is this life which the fearful and the unbelieving prolonged by their denial of Christ, and which martyrs lost by their confession of Christ? It is, and can be, nothing but *animal existence*. *It is the life which the good and the bad have in common.* It is that which both alike value, and would prolong, but which one are content to lose and do lose for Christ, and which the other will not lose for his sake. That which these latter have here prolonged for a little while, the Lord of Life tells them they shall lose in the future retribution, *i. e. they shall cease to exist.* Christ's words can here have no second meaning. And this is agreeable to all Scripture. Immortality is nowhere spoken of as the possession of fallen man, but is described as a blessing to be sought by him as much as the 'glory and honor' of the future state.<sup>4</sup>

And here we will refer for a moment to a passage in the history of Moses which strongly confirms our view. Moses intercedes with God that Israel may be forgiven, and asks that, if his prayer

<sup>1</sup> James iv, 14.    <sup>2</sup> Psyche.    <sup>3</sup> Matt. ii. 20, x. 39; John x. 11; Rom. xi. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. ii. 7, vi. 23.



be not granted, he may be blotted out of the book which God had written.<sup>1</sup> This book can be no other than that 'Book of Life' frequently referred to in Scripture, in which the names of the redeemed are written.<sup>2</sup> What, then, did Moses mean by his receiving the doom of sinners, and being blotted out of the book of life? We cannot for a moment suppose that he wished throughout eternity for a life of pain and moral corruption. He could only have wished for the utter cessation of a life which he then felt would be intolerable if his prayer were refused. Since this must be his meaning, it follows that what he asked for himself shall actually be the condition of the ungodly, for God in this place declared that what Moses sought for himself He will inflict on them—'Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.'

We now proceed to consider other expressions significant of future punishment. Of these none are so common as the Greek verb and noun translated by the words 'destroy,' 'perish,' 'destruction.'<sup>3</sup> *None are more significant of the utter loss of life.* 'Broad is the way that leadeth to destruction,' saith Christ: and Paul speaks of the ungodly as 'vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction.' Our Lord tells us to fear Him 'who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell:' and Paul affirms that 'they who have sinned without law shall perish without law,' that he is 'a savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that perish.'<sup>4</sup>

If we go to the Greek Lexicon we will find that the terms used in these passages signify primarily *the destruction and loss of life.*<sup>5</sup> For the present we confine our attention to their use in the New Testament. We will find it in strict agreement with the analogy of ordinary Greek writers. Matt. vii. 13 runs thus: 'Broad is the way that leadeth to *destruction*,' and the next verse adds 'narrow is the way that leadeth unto *life*.' Here it will be remarked that 'destruction' is used as the opposite to 'life,' *i. e.* as the loss of life. Matt. x. 28 runs thus: 'Fear not them which *kill* the body, but are not able to *kill* the soul: but rather fear Him who is able to *destroy* both body and soul in hell.' Here 'destroy' is used as the equivalent to 'kill:' that which man is able to do to our bodies, but which he cannot do to our souls, *viz: kill them*, that God is able to do in hell both to body and soul. The

<sup>1</sup> Ex. xxxii. 32, 33.    <sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxix. 28; Luke x. 20; Rev. xx. 15.    <sup>3</sup> Apollumi, Apoleia.

<sup>4</sup> Matt. vii. 13; Rom. ix. 22; Matt. x. 28; Rom. ii. 12; 2 Cor. ii. 15.

<sup>5</sup> Fairbairn's Imperial Bible Dictionary. Art. 'Perdition.'



same connection of 'destruction' with loss of life is seen in 2 Cor. ii. 15, 16: 'We are a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and in them that *perish*. To the one we are the savour of *death unto death*.' And so we find from the speech of Festus to Agrippa, recorded by Luke in Acts xxv. 16, that the word usually translated 'destruction' was the common term used for the loss of physical existence. These passages abundantly show us that the New Testament, when it speaks of the 'destruction' of the wicked, follows the general analogy of the Greek language, and means loss of life in hell.

In exact agreement with the foregoing are the other expressions used in the New Testament. Thus Paul adopts the teaching of the Old Testament as truly descriptive of future punishment, and sums it up in these words, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, *and perish*.'<sup>1</sup> The Greek word<sup>2</sup> here translated 'perish,' means properly to 'become unseen, to disappear and be heard no more.' The whole process is described in these pithy words; unbelievers will first see what they have rejected, will marvel at their folly, and then vanish out of existence.

Another Greek word,<sup>3</sup> translated 'defile,' 'corrupt,' 'destroy,' and used to express future punishment, has, when applied to man, two main senses. One is to deprave and corrupt, the other to destroy by depriving of existence. As it would be impious to suppose that God will ever do Satan's work of corrupting, we can only take the word in the second sense.<sup>4</sup> A good example of these different senses is found in 1 Cor. iii. 17, 'If any man *defile* the temple of God, him shall God *destroy*.' It is the same Greek verb which here first signifies 'defile' and afterwards 'destroy.' The first is the sinner's guilty act: the second is God's punishment hereafter by death. The Greek noun<sup>5</sup> of this verb has in the same way the two senses of moral corruption and destruction by death, and is frequently applied to future punishment.<sup>6</sup> When spoken of as what God will inflict in punishment it can only bear the latter sense. We would direct attention to the passage in 2 Pet. ii. 12, as affording indubitable proof that it is thus used in Scripture. Speaking of the ungodly, Peter says, 'these, as *natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed*, shall utterly *perish in their own corruption*.' Here the same Greek word is used of the end of beasts and of the end of the ungodly. We know what is the end of beasts taken and de-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 41.<sup>2</sup> Aphanizo.<sup>3</sup> Phtheiro.<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 17; 2 Pet. ii. 12.<sup>5</sup> Phthora.<sup>6</sup> Gal. vi. 8; 2 Pet. ii. 12.

stroyed: even such Peter declares will be the end of the ungodly in the future life: *they shall perish there as beasts perish here.*

Another Greek word<sup>1</sup> translated 'destroy,' and applied to future punishment, is properly significant of utter extermination by death.<sup>2</sup> Its noun,<sup>3</sup> also thus applied, has the same signification: the wicked shall be 'punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.'<sup>4</sup>

We have brought forward a variety of phrases from the New Testament. We have now to consider the mighty bearing on their meaning of the fact that this New Testament is written *in the Greek tongue.* In that tongue all these phrases are to be found. Before the Gospel was preached, their meaning was fully established in the cultivated and the common mind of the human race. What is more, they were all in common use, and applied to, and their sense established, *with reference to this very point now under discussion.* The immortality of the soul was not a question for Jewish and Christian thought alone; it was the question of questions for the universal human mind. In particular, it was the question of questions in the various schools of Grecian Philosophy. One of the noblest specimens of human reasoning, building its lofty superstructure on uncertain data, that has ever charmed, exalted, and, for our part, we must add, bewildered the human intellect, is found in the dying discourse of Socrates to his friends, handed down to a deathless fame in the 'Phædo' of Plato. Its object was to prove the immortality of the soul—that it could never cease to be—that through whatever changes it might pass, whatever pollutions it might suffer, whatever fearful torments it might endure, there was the deathless principle of the human soul which asserted an eternal life and utterly refused to die. It could never be, according to Plato, a thing of yesterday, an existence of the past but not of the present, a figure once jotted down in the book of life and then blotted out of it for ever. In what terms is the denial of its mortality conveyed? In the very terms in which the punishment of the wicked is asserted in the New Testament. Where the latter says the soul shall die, Plato says it shall not die; where the latter says it shall be destroyed, Plato says it shall not be destroyed; where the latter says it shall perish and suffer corruption, Plato says it shall not perish and is incorruptible.<sup>5</sup> The phrases are the very same,

<sup>1</sup> Exolothreno.    <sup>2</sup> Acts iii. 23.    <sup>3</sup> Olothros.    <sup>4</sup> 1 Thess. v. 3; 2 Thess. i. 9; 1 Tim. vi. 9.    <sup>5</sup> Plato's 'Phædo,' paragraphs 33, 14, 29, 23, 8, 55, 37, 41, 44, 17, ed. Bekker.

only that what Plato denies of all souls alike, the New Testament asserts of some of the souls of men. But the discussion of the question was not confined to the school of Plato or to his times. Every school of philosophy took it up, whether to confirm Plato's view, or to deny it, or to heap ridicule upon it. All the phrases we have been discussing from the New Testament had been explained, turned over and over, handled with all the power of the masters of language, presented in every phase, so that of their sense there could be no doubt, nor could there be any one ignorant of their sense before Jesus spoke, or an Evangelist or Apostle wrote. The subject had not died out before the days of Christ. It never could and never will die out. In every city of the Roman world were schools of Grecian thought in the days of the Apostles. In every school the question before us was discussed in the phrases and language of the New Testament. In Jerusalem, and Rome, and Athens, and Corinth, and Ephesus, and Antioch—wherever a Christian preacher opened his mouth to speak to man of his future destiny—where Platonists, or Epicureans, or Stoics, or Alexandrians, to whom the question of the soul's immortality was a question of constant thought, with whom the phrases in which the preacher addressed them as to their solemn future were familiar household words. Their language was his language, whether he spoke or wrote; their terms were his terms, and their meaning his meaning, else there were perplexities without a clue, logomachies without an end. And what did the Christian preacher declare, and the Christian writer write, to that world-wide community which was ruled and bound together, not merely by the power of Roman will, but by the sceptre of the Grecian tongue?<sup>1</sup> In Sermon and Disputation, in Gospel and History and Epistle and Revelation, the propagators of the new religion asserted of the persons of the wicked—*i. e.* of souls and bodies reunited at the resurrection—that which Plato had denied could happen to any soul. The cultivated intellect of the world, as well as the popular mind, read in the words of Christ, of Paul, of John, of Peter, of James, that what one of its sects of philosophy taught could happen to no soul, and what another taught should happen to all souls, the rising school of the Nazarene taught would happen to those whom its phraseology described as 'unjust,' 'wicked,' 'unbelievers.' Plato's noble conception, itself but the utterance of the longing of the human heart for its original inheritance, was

<sup>1</sup> Robert's 'Discussions on the Gospels,' pp. 26-29, 33, 48.



taken up by the New Testament, only that it had here given to it its true direction, and had the eternal life after which it yearned connected with the God of Life manifested in His Son. In Jesus Christ was that 'life' which Plato fancied might exist in the soul itself. This life he would bestow upon his people, realizing more than the conception of Plato. But away from Him there was no life. On those who would not come to Him for life there would come finally—after stripes few or many—the end pictured for all by Epicurus. The Gospel brought together the fragments of truth scattered throughout human systems. Those who would soar it raises to God; those who would revel in the sty of sensuality it sinks to the level of the beasts that perish.

We will now draw attention to one other phrase<sup>1</sup> of the New Testament significant of future punishment. It occurs in Paul's wish that he 'were *accursed* from Christ for his brethren;'<sup>2</sup> a passage affording an exact parallel to the prayer of Moses already referred to. There can be no doubt that, whatever Paul here means by being 'accursed from Christ,' is that condition in which the ungodly will really be.<sup>3</sup> What, then, *could* Paul here wish for himself? Less of him than of almost any man that ever lived are we to suppose that he could for a moment wish for himself an eternal life of blasphemy and moral corruption which, according to one of the theories we are opposing, is the condition of the reprobate throughout eternity. We can only suppose him to mean that he could suffer an eternal death, a blotting out of his own name from the book of the living, if by so doing he could gain for his kinsmen the life he had surrendered for himself.<sup>4</sup> This sense is in exact agreement with the use of the term 'accursed' among the Greeks, by whom it was applied to any animal devoted to death, and removed out of the sight of men, in order to avert calamity. We will also find abundant confirmation of our view in the usage of the corresponding Hebrew term (*Cherem*.) in the Old Testament, when applied to things devoted to cursing.<sup>5</sup> Utter death where there was life, utter destruction where no life existed, was the end of persons and things thus devoted to a curse.

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NOTE.—I had intended to add to this reprint of Mr. Constable's work, an appendix, containing with comments, all the

<sup>1</sup> Anathema.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. ix. 3. See Alford.    <sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Bengel on Rom. ix. 3.    <sup>5</sup> Deut. vii. 26, xiii. 16; Josh. vi. 17-21, vii. 13-25.



passages in the New Testament bearing upon future punishment, but this, I find, would make the pamphlet too bulky. I desire, however, to supplement this chapter upon the Testimony of the New Testament, with at least a hasty survey of some of these passages.

Has it never occurred to the reader, as to myself, when searching for Biblical language in which to present and enforce the eternity of future suffering, to be surprised and puzzled to observe how unsatisfactory and feeble seem all the Apostolic references to future unending woe? In fact, throughout John's Gospel and the Epistles, where the doctrines of the New Testament are especially unfolded, future punishment is mentioned *only* under some term of death or destruction! How simple is Christ's language all through John, beginning with the Gospel in Epitome, as Luther called it, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not *perish*, but have *everlasting life*."<sup>1</sup> And so throughout this Gospel He ever sets simply life against death. Surely, this is no figure of speech. To "perish" is the literal opposite of "everlasting life." We do not believe that our Lord anticipated the need of a commentator, as we have ever had for us, to explain that "perishing" and "death" mean everlasting life in misery, while "everlasting life" should read everlasting happiness, or something of that kind. Ah! may we not well enquire whether the Church of to-day is not, like the Pharisees of old, "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men?"<sup>2</sup>

In the Acts of the Apostles, that missionary record of the first planting of the Gospel, among all its reports and outlines of sermons, should we not expect to find some explicit notice of eternal suffering, if such there be? Here is every passage it presents on that question: (1.) Chap. iii. 23, "Every soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be *destroyed* from among the people." (2.) xii. 41, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and *perish*," (literally, vanish away.) (3.) ver. 46, "Unworthy of everlasting life." (4.) xviii. 6, "When they opposed themselves and blasphemed, he shook his raiment and said, Your blood be upon your own heads: I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles." Thus to these blaspheming Jews, instead of setting forth as their punishment a hell of eternal torment, Paul solemnly tells them they must answer for their

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 16.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xv. 9.

conduct with their lives—"your blood." (5.) xxiv. 15, "There shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and of the unjust." And this is absolutely all to be found on this subject in Acts.

Nor will anything more in *any Epistle* be found, expressing a thought of the eternity of torment. What! you may exclaim, has not James, plain spoken and practical as he is, has he not left us in his Epistle one unmistakable declaration of future unending woe? Let us see. Chap. i. ver. 2, he tells us that as the grass withereth when the burning sun rises upon it, "So shall the rich man *fade away* in his ways;" evidently referring not alone to that closing of mortal life which all must undergo, for in the next verse, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of *life*." Verse 15, "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth *death*." Chap. v. 3, "The rust of your gold and silver shall eat your flesh as it were fire; and verse 20, "He that converteth the sinner shall save a soul from *death*." Here we have the entire testimony of James. It is plain and to the point,—Sin, when it is *finished*, bringeth forth *death*!

Perfectly accordant with this is the testimony of Peter. It is simple, intelligible, explicit, if taken literally; if we take it as usually explained, as referring to an unending life of misery, we must confess it is strangely lacking in expression and illustration. For example, we have in Chap. i. ver. 23, the Apostle speaking to and so of individuals, not simply of their bodies—"Being born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever. For all flesh is as grass, \* \* the grass withereth, \* \* but the Word of the Lord endureth forever." Like the grass the individual begotten of corruptible seed naturally perishes, (withereth, says Peter—fades away, says James,) but when the same is regenerated, born again of incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, he then liveth and endureth forever! It is the same, simple, old story—death or life, and each state eternal.

We have not room for Paul's many utterances on this subject. Take as samples, two or three passages in which, if anywhere, we should look for an unequivocal expression of the whole truth. First, Philippians iii. 18, 19, "Many walk of whom I have told you often, and tell you now even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose end is *destruction*." Af-

fectured even to weeping by the thought of their impending doom, had that fate been an endless existence in torment, would Paul have contented himself with this word, which suggests rather a total arrest of all existence?

Again, Galatians v. 19-21, after a catalogue of the vilest crimes the Apostle sums up, "Of the which I tell you before as I have also told you in time past, that they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Here Paul speaks of the loss such evil doers sustain, but not one word of the immeasurable suffering to be inflicted through all eternity! Thus silent in every Epistle on this point, how, if such a fate were before the men of his time, could he say as in Colossians i. 28, "Warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom?" What is the only fair inference from all this? Unquestionably, that Paul had not a thought of immortality for the wicked!

But once more, notice a passage which appears to me to be incontrovertible. In 1-Cor. xv. 54, 55, we read, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The whole context proves that Paul here speaks of that mortal death which has passed upon all men. In verse 57 he continues, "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The victory over death, what is it? In the first of these verses the Apostle has defined it for us in so many words, as "this corruptible putting on incorruption, and this mortal putting on immortality." So that according to the Apostle, the attainment of a literal immortality, of life beyond the grave, is the victory over death; and this victory, he declares, comes to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. All men then do not possess it, for it is given to "us" only through Christ. Is it not then a logical inference, nay, the plain teaching of this passage, that for those out of Christ, there is no such victory, that for them the corruptible does not put on incorruption, the mortal does not put on immortality. Deny this who can? It is "our Savior Jesus Christ, who has brought life and immortality to light."<sup>1</sup> Apart from Him there is no immortality!

In this connection let me refer the reader to the last of the Old Testament Prophets, Malachi iii. 18, and iv. 1. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth

<sup>1</sup> 2 Timothy, i 10.



Him not. For behold, the day that cometh, shall burn as an oven, and all the proud; yea, and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh *shall burn them up*, saith the Lord of Hosts, that it shall *leave them neither root nor branch.*" What is left of the stubble if both root and branch are burned up? Shall we say that this solemn declaration from the Lord of Hosts is a mere figurative use of language? Or rather, could words be chosen more fitly and fully to announce the literal destruction of the finally impenitent? I picture to myself that intensely heated oven; I see the dry stubble, plucked up by the roots from the ground it cumbered, thrust into its open mouth; its hot breath seizes upon it; a moment of fierce crackling when the flame leaps even higher than before, and—all is over; the destruction is complete, naught but ashes remains. And then I turn again to Malachi, and the next verse but one I read, "The wicked shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of Hosts."

And the next succeeding Prophet, whose coming was in this very chapter foretold by Malachi, John the Baptist opens the New Testament teachings on this topic with the same language and figure. He proclaims of the Messiah, "whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner; but He will *burn up* the chaff with unquenchable fire."<sup>1</sup>

And again He, who speaks as never man spake, repeats the same solemn announcement. "AS therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, SO shall it be in the end of the world."<sup>2</sup> After all this, these repeated declarations from the Lord of Hosts, from inspired prophet, and from the Son of God, can it be that we venture, mentally if not audibly, to reply, Not so, Lord: the tares, the chaff, the stubble, are burned up and literally destroyed, but we cannot believe that the wicked are "so" destroyed. Shall we presume thus to "make void the word of God through our traditions?"<sup>3</sup>

C. L. I.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. iii. 12.    <sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 40.    <sup>3</sup> Mark viii. 13.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF SCRIPTURE.

WE WILL devote a short chapter to the illustrations of future punishment found in Scripture. They are very numerous, present the subject in every variety of aspect, and are every one of them harmonious with the rest. We will compare them with the illustrations selected by men who held Augustine's theory of Hell, and with those of men who held that temporal death was for all that eternal non-existence, to which we hold that the second death will consign the ungodly. We have no hesitation in saying that the illustrations of Scripture, so varied, so numerous, so harmonious, are *by themselves* sufficient to decide this great question. They overthrow alike the system of eternal misery and of universal restoration.

Thus we find in the Old Testament the following illustrations of future punishment. The wicked shall be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel; they shall be like the beasts that perish; like the untimely fruit of a woman; like a whirlwind that passeth away; like a waterless garden scorched by an eastern sun; like garments consumed by the moth. They shall consume like the fat of lambs in the fire; consume like smoke; melt like wax; burn like tow; consume like thorns; vanish away like exhausted waters.<sup>1</sup> The illustrations of the New Testament are of the same character. The end of the wicked is there compared to fish cast away to corruption; to a house thrown down to its foundations; to the destruction of the old world by water, and that of the Sodomites by fire; to the death and destruction of natural brute beasts. They shall be like wood cast into quenchless flame; like chaff burnt up; like tares consumed; like a dry branch reduced to ashes.<sup>2</sup>

Such are the illustrations of Scripture. These are the images which God has selected from the world that is open to our inspection, in order to let us know what shall happen to the ungodly hereafter. We have no hesitation in saying that they are one and all irreconcilable with both Augustine's and Origen's theories of Hell. If it was true, according to the former, that the wicked

<sup>1</sup> Ps. ii. 9, xxxvii. 20, xlix. 20, lviii. 7, 8, lxviii. 2; Prov. x. 25; Is. i. 30; xxxiii. 12, li. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 48; Luke vi. 49, xvii. 27-29; 2 Pet. ii. 12; Matt. iii. 10-12, xiii. 30; John xv. 6.

never cease to exist in hell, that they preserve throughout eternity the form, substance, and organization with which they enter it, *these illustrations would be one and all unsuitable and false.* The wicked would *not* be according to Augustine's theory, like the beasts that perish, or a whirlwind that passeth away, or garments consumed by the moth. They would *not* consume like the fat of lambs in the fire, or consume into smoke, or melt like wax. They would *not* be like wood cast into quenchless flames, or like chaff burnt up, or like tares consumed, or like a dry branch reduced to ashes. All these lose their form, substance, and organization, and become as though they had never been, which the wicked never do, according to the theory of Augustine. The illustrations of Scripture, therefore, are fatal to his view. Every one of its images point—not to the preservation of being in any state of pain, but to the utter blotting out of existence and being and identity.

Let us now compare these illustrations so far as we can with those of ordinary writers, and see if the comparison does not bear out our view. The Epicurean poet Lucretius is a writer just suitable for our purpose. He knew nothing of our Scriptures, and wrote without any reference to their views. He held, however, the theory most opposed in philosophy to that of Plato. He held that the death which we all here endure was *to all men* what we suppose the second death will finally be to the ungodly. He held that body and soul alike ceased to exist at death; that there was then an utter end of man's being. He does not use many illustrations of this destruction of all life, but there is one which he does use very frequently as most descriptive of his view. It is that the dissolution of life at death *is like smoke vanishing and dispersing into air.*

‘As the smoke disperses into the air,  
So believe that the soul also is dissolved.’<sup>1</sup>

Now this illustration of Lucretius is also a favorite illustration of Scripture when describing the end of the ungodly; ‘the wicked shall perish: they shall consume; *into smoke shall they consume away.*’<sup>2</sup>

We will now turn to another class of writers, here equally unsuspected and fit for our purpose—the Christian Fathers Tertullian and Augustine. They held that the wicked will exist for ever in the fire of hell. They wished to illustrate their view.

<sup>1</sup> Lucretius *De Rer. Nat.* iii.    <sup>2</sup> Ps. xxxvii. 20, lxxviii. 2.



Is it not most significant that these men, perfectly familiar with the illustrations of Scripture on this subject, instinctively turn from them as unsuitable for their purpose, and select with much pains, from a survey of nature as it was understood by them, a series of illustrations not only absent from Scripture, but of a nature diametrically opposed to those of Scripture. According to Tertullian, the wicked will be like mountains, which burn but are *not consumed*; like a body struck by lightning, whose organization is *uninjured*, and itself *not reduced to ashes*. According to Augustine, the wicked will be like salamanders, which are *not destroyed* in the fire; like diamonds, which are *indestructible* in scorching heat; like Vesuvius and Etna, which burn but *do not consume*.<sup>1</sup> These are *not* the illustrations of Scripture; they contradict those of Scripture. According to these latter, the wicked will *not* be like the salamanders and burning mountains of Tertullian and Augustine: they will be destroyed, consume away, be reduced to ashes, as the fat of lambs or the dry wood and thorns.

In obedience, then, to the teaching of Scripture in its oft-repeated illustrations, we hold that the punishment of the wicked will result in the destruction of their being. Every one of its images point—not to the preservation of life in any condition, but to the loss of life, the utter blotting out of existence.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### EXAMINATION OF PARTICULAR TEXTS.

IN OUR rapid survey of Scripture heretofore we were unable to give to some individual texts that attention which from their prominent place in this controversy they deserve. We now proceed to do so. The texts we refer to are texts which are most commonly and most boldly advanced by advocates of the Augustinian theory in proof of their view. We think a fair and candid examination of <sup>†</sup> will show that instead of supporting they condemn their view.

We will first consider Mark ix. 44. Speaking here of hell, and of those who will be consigned to hell, our Lord most solemnly, and with threefold repetition pronounces their doom,—‘*their*

<sup>1</sup> *Apol.* xlvi. *De Civ. Dei.* 21.

*worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*' It is on this text that Augustine in his 'City of God' mainly relies for his view,<sup>1</sup> and this is perhaps the text of all others which is most boldly put forward as establishing it. Instead of supporting, however, it contradicts it plainly. This solemn declaration of Christ is not an original saying of his, but is quoted word for word from Isaiah lxvi. 24. We will give it *with its context*. Speaking of the redeemed of the earth, Isaiah says: '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.' A moment's glance shows us that both the worm and the fire are alike external to and distinct from the subject on which they prey, and also that what both prey upon are *not the living but the dead*. Isaiah frequently uses the image of the 'worm,' but it is always in connection with *death*.<sup>2</sup> The fearful image is taken from the worm which feeds upon the carcass, and the fire which consumes it, and conveys the notion, not of life, but of its opposite, death; and of hell as the cleanser of God's world by the utter destruction of the remains of the wicked. These most solemn words of the prophet, so solemnly endorsed by Christ, assert a state of eternal death and destruction, not one of eternal life in hell, as the fate of transgressors in the world to come. They are fatal alike to the theories of Augustine and Origen.

Isaiah xxxiii. 14: 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' is very often brought forward in proof of the eternity of future misery. While some have doubted that this refers to future punishment, we are not ourselves disposed to question that it does. If it does, it affords us very valuable proof that the eternity which is affirmed of future punishment does not refer to any eternity of life in misery, but to the *eternal extinction of life*, the *irrevocable loss* which the wicked will bring upon themselves. This is seen from the context of the passage. They who are spoken of in the 14th verse are 'the people' of the 12th verse who '*shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire.*' The 'everlasting burnings,' then, are burnings *whose effects are endured throughout eternity*. *They have cut off a life which shall never be restored again.* They are God's solemn warning that Origen's

<sup>1</sup> Book xxi. cap. 9.    <sup>2</sup> Is. xiv. 11, li. 8.



theory of a restoration at some future period from hell is a false and delusive dream.

We now come to the famous passages in the Book of Revelation. Driven hopelessly from the plainer parts of Scripture, the advocates of eternal life in hell think that they have in this obscure, mysterious, and highly-wrought figurative book, at least two passages which authorize them to change numberless passages in the rest of Scripture, and some even in the Book of Revelation itself, from their plain and obvious meaning to one that is forced, unnatural, and often false to all the laws of the interpretation of language. We will see whether they are possessed of this tremendous force. Of the worshippers of the beast we are told in the former that they 'shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: *and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever*: and they have no rest day nor night:' in the latter passage we are told that '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 forever and ever*.'

We will not dwell upon the fact that it is a disputed question whether these passages, or at least the former of them, refer at all to future punishment. Elliott, who maintained the theory of Augustine, has no hesitation in referring Rev. xiv. 10, 11, together with the kindred passage in xix. 3, *to a temporal judgment*, viz: the swallowing up by volcanic fire of the territory of Rome in Italy.<sup>1</sup> We will, however, take them in their usual reference, as indicating God's eternal judgments hereafter upon fallen spirits and wicked men. Their sense we believe to be this—that the future punishment of all consigned to hell will be of an eternal nature, and that its fearful effect—the plunging of its subjects into death and destruction—will ever remain visible to the redeemed and angelic worlds.

We will not try to establish this sense by examining the force of each word. We deny that language so highly figurative and poetical is *capable* of any such dialectical analysis, *or that such is the manner in which we ordinarily interpret language of the kind*. We must not apply to highly-wrought figures the laws we apply to ordinary language. We here charge our opponents with *reversing the laws of language*. All the expressions which God uses of future punishment in what we may call

<sup>1</sup> *Horæ Apoc* iv. 212, iii. 443, iv. 5.



the legal documents of Scripture,—such expressions as ‘death,’ ‘destruction,’ ‘life,’ etc.—they insist on interpreting *as figures*; but the moment they come to a book which is figurative beyond perhaps any other book that was ever written, they insist on interpreting their favorite passages in it by the strictest laws *of prose*. It is but a hopeless cause that requires such handling as this.

The way in which we will show the sense we put on the passages in Revelation to be reasonable is this: We will present similar passages from other Scriptures, written in like strong language and analogical terms, to which no such interpretation can be given as that attributed by our opponents to these passages in Revelation, but which do bear a sense such as we have put upon them above. Our argument is that if one passage is capable of such an interpretation, and has such an interpretation put upon it by the Spirit who inspired it, we may lawfully allow these to have a similar meaning, *and, reverencing the plainer testimony of other Scriptures, are bound to do so.*

We will draw our readers’ attention to Jude, ver. 7, ‘*even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*’ We want to arrive at the sense of this passage. We will first say what this suffering of the Sodomites is not. It does not then, in the first place refer to anything they suffer, or may be thought to suffer in Hades, for the condition of the Sodomites in Hades is never alluded to in Scripture, and is therefore no warning example set before men to learn from. In the second place, it does not refer to anything they may hereafter suffer in hell, for that is to them confessedly, as to all sinners, a future thing, whereas what the text speaks of is something which they were suffering when Jude wrote, and had suffered before he wrote, and which had long been a plain and palpable warning to ungodly men. If it does not refer to either of them it is very evident what it does refer to. It means that punishment, open to human sight, which began when the fire from heaven descended on the guilty cities, and which has remained in force through all the succeeding generations down to our own time, and will continue while the earth remains. *It is their overthrow in the days of Lot, and their abiding condition ever since, which are here placed before the ungodly as*

an example of what awaits them hereafter if they imitate Sodom. This view is not first presented by Jude, it is frequently met with in the older Scriptures. Thus in Deut. xxix. 23, the then existing condition of Sodom and Gomorrha, '*brimstone and salt and burning, that is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth thereon,*' is held up as the resemblance to which the land of Israel will be reduced if they turn to idols. Similar allusions abound in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> In all of them we find the present unchanging condition of Sodom a favorite image to set forth either a like state of similar cities in this life or of the ungodly in the life to come.<sup>2</sup>

What has been and is this state of Sodom? In the days of Abraham four rich and populous cities flourished in the plain of Jordan. On a sudden, fire descended from heaven, and after a period of terror, regrets, and pain, the inhabitants were deprived of life. They and their works were burnt up, and this ruined, lifeless, hopeless condition has remained to the present time. 'The smell of the fire is still over the land,' says Tertulian. The whole transaction conveys the idea of conscious pain for a time, followed by ruin and death for all time.

In what terms is this condition described? Sodom and Gomorrha—an expression especially including the people of these cities—are described as '*suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*' They suffered such vengeance in Lot's day, and have suffered it ever since. *It is their eternal suffering from fire.* But when we come to think of the state thus described, what is it? It is not endless life in pain. Pain and life were over in a very short time in the sulphurous fire, but life and joy have never since been seen where the destruction fell: death and desolation have ever since reigned there.<sup>3</sup> This is, according to Jude, '*suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.*'

This passage from Jude then serves two purposes. First, it establishes our theory, for it represents the punishment of Sodom as an exact pattern of future punishment. Secondly, it is our guide to the interpretation of the passages in Revelation. The phrases, '*the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever,*' and, '*they shall be tormented day and night for ever,*' applied to the objects of future punishment, are not more indicative of endless life and pain in hell than the phrase, '*suffering the vengeance of eternal fire,*' applied to the pun-

<sup>1</sup> Is. i. 9, xiii. 19; Jer. xlix. 18, l. 40, 2 Pet. ii. 6.    <sup>2</sup> Religious Tendencies, &c., by J. Grant, vol. i. p. 270.    <sup>3</sup> Wisdom x. 7. Josephus, 'Jewish War,' iv., viii. iv.



ishment of the Sodomites, is indicative of their having lived in pain from Abraham's day to ours. The Greek verb 'to torment' is used of things without life as well as of living beings.<sup>1</sup> The one idea, common to the passages compared, is the eternity of the ruin which sinners bring upon themselves. We may add, that this interpretation put on the passages in Revelation is required in order to bring that book into harmony *with itself*, since it, just as other Scriptures, describes the future condition of the ungodly as a state of death and destruction, as a being blotted out of the book of life.<sup>2</sup>

Let us turn to another passage, from which in all probability the imagery of Revelation was borrowed, and see if it does not fully bear out our interpretation. Isaiah, in his own grand poetical language, is describing the temporal judgments brought by God upon the land of Idumea. He says, 'the land thereof shall become burning pitch. *It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever.*' Here, as in Revelation, we have the smoke of judgment or torment going up for ever! But would the advocates of Augustine's hell tell us that if we went to Idumea we should see people there who had been suffering pain from some period subsequent to Isaiah's prophecy to the present time? The poetical figure of a perpetual furnace and smoke merely conveys the idea of perpetual desolation, but by no means of endless life in pain. The present condition of Edom is the explanation of the poetic figure: its cities have fallen into ruin: the whole land is a desert.<sup>3</sup> Listen to Poole's comment on the text: '*it shall be irrecoverably ruined, and shall remain as a spectacle of God's vengeance to all succeeding ages.*' As Poole, the Augustinian, interprets Isaiah, so do we, who abhor Augustine's theory, interpret those passages in Revelation which are in all likelihood borrowed from Isaiah. We interpret Scripture by its own analogy.

We are here naturally led to consider what it is that is really meant by the terms 'eternal fire,' 'unquenchable fire,' so often applied to the fire of hell. We are not now considering the nature of the fire itself, whether it be identical with or analogous only to fire such as here consumes. What we are considering is whether, be this fire what it may, it continues throughout eternity to burn as it burns when the reprobates are first placed therein. The passage from Jude leads us to conclude that it

<sup>1</sup> See original of Matt. xiv. 24.      <sup>2</sup> Rev. iii. 5, xi. 18, xvii. 8, xx. 6.

<sup>3</sup> Smith's Dictionary. Art. 'Edom.'



only burns *while it has anything to consume.*<sup>1</sup> The fire of Sodom is called an 'eternal fire,' but it only burned while aught remained of the guilty cities to be consumed. It could not be extinguished until then. Jordan poured upon it could not put out its flames: Abraham's prayers could not abate its force: mercy had put forward its last plea in the bosom of God. But when all had been reduced to ashes the fire went out, and the smoke ceased to rise, leaving behind an utter destruction which no lapse of time was to repair. It is thus that we are to view the unquenchable fire of hell.

We are to consider that the term is one in common use. It is not confined to hell, or peculiar to theology. It is constantly applied to fire burning here on earth which is unquenchable, inasmuch as all human efforts cannot quench it, but which, when it has done its work of destruction, smoulders away and dies out. The classical scholar will remember the famous passage of Homer where the Trojans hurl 'unquenchable fire' upon the Grecian ships, though but one of them was burnt, and that one only half consumed.<sup>2</sup> In the very same way it is constantly used in Scripture. When God in one place declares that his anger would be poured out 'upon man and upon beast, and upon the fruit of the ground, and shall burn, and shall not be quenched,' and in another that He will 'kindle a fire in the gates of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched,'<sup>3</sup> He means that his wrath was to continue till man and beast were destroyed, and the fire was to continue till the gates of Jerusalem were consumed. Then wrath ceased because it had spent its force, and the fire went out because it had eaten up all on which it could prey.<sup>4</sup> So we are to understand that unquenchable fire which is the terrible fate of the lost. *Their fire is not quenched.* It preys upon them with relentless force. No cries on the part of the damned arrest it: no prayers ascend from the redeemed for the sin which they know to be unto eternal death: no feelings of pity in God's bosom interfere to check its course. It burns on, consuming, preying, reducing, until it has consumed and burnt all. When it has spent its force it dies out for want of food, leaving behind it the endless sign of the destruction which it has brought on fallen archangel, and angel, and man. *This is the second death.* But we can bear to look upon it *because it is death.* We are not looking upon a picture which would overturn reason and banish

<sup>1</sup> Scripture Revelations of a Future State, 7th edition, p. 234.    <sup>2</sup> Il. xvi. 123, 294.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. vii. 20, xvii. 27.    <sup>4</sup> Ezek. xx. 47, 48; Ecclus. xxviii. 23.

peace from all who beheld it. Life has left the realms of the lost. The reprobate felt, but do not continue to feel the consuming flames. These prey upon the dead until dust and ashes cover the floor of the furnace of hell.<sup>1</sup>

In Origin's view of the future, a view now fast spreading, we see the real cause of the emphatic, repeated, awful declarations of the *eternity* of future punishment. That view, so pleasing to fallen human nature, was the view against which the Spirit of God laid down in Scripture the warnings of everlasting destruction, of unquenchable fire. Experience has proved the necessity of this. Even in the face of these Scriptures men are found to advocate the hope of a restoration from hell. Far more than Augustine's theory does the view here maintained root out this false delusive hope. So long as men believe that life is not extinguished in hell, so long they will nourish hope.<sup>2</sup> They will cherish the idea that somewhere down through the ages, when the groans of hell have been beating sadly, ceaselessly, at the gates of heaven, the message of mercy and deliverance may again be sent down, even as God used to send it of old to Israel groaning beneath the bondage of Egypt, Philistia, and Canaan. Death extirpates all such hopes. 'Corruption has a hope of a kind of removal, but *death has everlasting ruin.*'<sup>3</sup>

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## CHAPTER VII.

### *DISTINCTIONS IN FUTURE PUNISHMENT.*

WHILE we see one universal result—namely, death—to arise from future punishment, we are also told in Scripture of varying circumstances attendant on it which are necessary to be considered, in order to enable us to form an adequate conception of its nature and variety.

Hell is not to all a sudden cessation of existence. There is life in that fearful prison, though it continues not for ever. This is shown by the numerous texts which speak of weeping and wailing, of regrets and anguish on the part of the damned. As here life goes before death, and as here regrets and pains precede and produce death, so we find it to be, on the part of many

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iv. 3; Theophilus Ant. 116 A, edition of Justin Martyr. <sup>2</sup> Milton, 'Par. Lost,' ii. 221-237. <sup>3</sup> Pastor of Hermas. Sim. vi. c. 11. Apostolic Fathers. Clark, 1868.

at least, in the scene of future doom. The children of the kingdom, cast into its outer darkness, gnash their teeth when they think of those who have come from east and west, and enjoy what they have lost. The unworthy guest at the marriage feast of Christ is in despair that he is not suffered to continue there. The despisers of the offers of redemption, be they Jews or Gentiles, behold their astounding folly, and marvel at its greatness. The unfaithful servant has time to bewail his want of fidelity, and the hypocrite to see that the portion he has chosen is a bitter and a hard one, ere all—sooner or later—sink into that state where wonder and remorse and pain and shame are lulled in the unconscious sleep of the second death.<sup>1</sup>

And here we must remark that all the warnings of 'weeping and gnashing of teeth' are addressed *to the rejectors of proffered grace*. Not one of them is addressed to such as the men of Sodom and Gomorrha, Nineveh, and Babylon, were in old times; to such as the men of Cabul and Bokhara, Teheran and Timbuctoo, are at the present day. The same holds good, we believe, of every especial warning found in Scripture.

Now it is doubtless in these circumstances that we will find room for that great distinction in guilt, and consequent punishment, which Scripture repeatedly insists on. Its cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida; its children of the kingdom; its refusers of an apostle's message; its hypocrites trading on a false profession; its men aware of their master's will; are held up as exceeding in guilt the ignorant offender, the undesigning sinner, the rejecter of an unauthenticated messenger, the uncovenanted transgressor, the men of Tyre and Sidon. For the former are the many stripes; for the latter the few.<sup>2</sup> Our theory affords ample room for that great distinction in punishment which God will hereafter make.

And here we find a perfect analogy in the circumstances of the first death. This world is a world of death. All here are doomed to die, and all suffer death. In this there is no distinction. But in the circumstances of dying there is infinite variety. One man lives close upon a thousand years ere he yields to death; to another the first breath he breathes in the world is his last. Between Methusaleh and the infant of a moment's life lies every variety of duration. Again; one dies as though he were going to rest in sleep. Another is racked with

<sup>1</sup> Matt. viii. 12, xxii. 13, xxiv. 51; Luke xiii. 28; Acts xiii. 41.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xi. 22, viii. 12, x. 15; Luke xx. 47, xii. 48; John ix. 41.



pains, year after year, by day and by night, which make him curse the weary life that is so hardly parted from. Between these deaths lies every variety of comparative unconsciousness, inconvenience, uneasiness, weariness, and anguish. A like distinction we are positively told will exist in the 'second death,' and our theory affords for it perfect scope. To some this death may be an instantaneous process, a momentary transition from one state to another, like the infant who opens his eyes on this world and then closes them for ever. Here may be the amount of conscious pain for the myriads upon myriads of young and old who, in heathen, and even in Christian countries, from the inevitable moral darkness with which their circumstances had surrounded them, scarce knew wrong from right. To others the process of the second death may be more or less lengthened until we arrive at the case of the greatest human offenders, or that more aggravated one of the spirits who fell from heaven and drew weaker man along with them in their fall. In our theory we see how it may be, as it certainly will be, more tolerable for some than for others in the day of judgment; how, while stripes many and sore fall on some, on others they may fall so few and so light as scarcely to be felt at all.

It has been doubtless remarked, from several expressions of ours, that we hold that the ultimate fate of devils will be the same as that of the reprobate. We have no doubt such is the case, and all Scripture tends to that end. They share in that judgment which awaits the ungodly. The everlasting fire which consumes the wicked is that which has been prepared for the devil and his angels. They themselves look forward to be 'destroyed' in hell. The pains which they dread are those which the ungodly will endure, and which result in death. The final extinction of evil to which God has pledged Himself in his word compels us to hold their destruction.<sup>1</sup> Nor can one single reason be advanced why God should not do this. The fire which is able to bring to dissolution that human spirit which man's power cannot reach, is able also to bring to dissolution that angelic spirit which is probably more tenacious of life. And we have thus in Scripture a far more satisfactory view of the final state of retribution than is afforded us by popular theology or poetic imagination. Devils are not the tyrants

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. ii. 4; Jude v. 6; Matt. xxv. 41; Mark i. 24; Luke iv. 34; Epistle of Barnabas, c. xxi., Justin Martyr Dial. Tryp. p. 264; 329 A; 319 B; 477, 327 D; 350 B.

of hell. Devils do not exercise there an endless power over the victims of their fraud. They are only punished in hell with a severity proportioned to their guilt. With fearful reason they look forward to it, not as a scene of further triumph but of unmitigated woe. They see, in all probability, the world whom they had seduced from God—the greater part of it speedily, all of it at one time or other—reduced to the original unfeeling elements of their being, while their stronger nature retains that vigorous life which makes it but the more susceptible of pain. The last being that retains the misery of existence may be that archfiend, Satan, the leader in heaven's rebellion, the prime mover in earth's falling away. When the lost race of man has long ceased to feel; when his fellow angels have, one by one, been reduced to the state of death; he may still survive, longing for the time when he too may lay aside a life which is only one of pain.

The view here advocated derives strong confirmation from its being in complete analogy with nature, *i. e.* with God's ordinary working. While those who seek God find Him, and in finding Him find life, and through His gracious plan of redemption are advanced in place and glory; we also find, with regard to others, lives innumerable lost, and in the case of angels an entire race blotted out of life. God and nature are not here at strife.<sup>1</sup> We find in nature that death and destruction are God's usual agents in removing from their place things animate and inanimate as soon as they cease to discharge the part for which they were intended. Throughout the wide domain of nature the law of death is in ceaseless operation. Of fifty seeds but one may bear fruit. Of the lower animals death after life is the universal law. Whole races of living things have long ceased to exist.

'From scarped cliff and quarried stone,  
She cries, a thousand types are gone.'

In our view, God does but apply to higher races for their sin that which he has applied to lower races who knew no sin. The grand distinction between these and us is, that we may see and know God who is Life and the source of all lower life.<sup>2</sup> If we turn from him we turn from life. We deny and renounce our real distinction, and are treated as that which we have made ourselves to become. *Mere individual life is not precious in*

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson 'In Memoriam.'    <sup>2</sup> Irenæus, iv., xxxvii., lxxv.

*God's sight.* If he scatters it with a prodigal hand, He removes it with a hand that is just as free. In the myriads of human beings reduced in hell to death, in the extinction of the fallen angels, we do but find a particular application of a universal law. Lower creatures know not God, and fade away out of life. Higher intelligences knew Him, turned from Him, made themselves like the beasts, and like beasts are treated. Hell will add its fossil remains to those of the quarries of the earth.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### *THE DIVINE JUSTICE.*

WE NOW approach a very solemn question, the question of Divine justice. We approach it with the deep reverence that becomes a creature when he scans and judges the conduct of his Maker, but also with the confidence which is becoming one who is invited by his Maker to this inquiry. It is indeed said that we are not able to judge of God's ways, and this, no doubt, is often true; but it is true only of those dealings of His with us with which we are imperfectly acquainted, or which, from their nature, are above our comprehension. The present subject belongs to neither of these categories. Future punishment is a matter fully set before us. We are told its cause and nature: told to ponder on and study it. We are not treated as children incapable of forming an opinion as to what is just or unjust in God. Called upon to love, respect, and confide in Him, we must be capable of judging of His character, of His love, His mercy, His wisdom, His justice. He has Himself appealed to us to do so, admitted His creature's scrutiny as the exercise of a right, and this not merely in the case of His faithful people, but of those who were alienated from Him.<sup>1</sup> In the human breast there is a true sense of what is just, and God not only allows it, but insists upon its exercise towards Himself. He has told us His character: He challenges us to bring any line of conduct attributed to Him to this test. In the question of future punishment we have the highest case on which any tribunal shall have ever sat; and we may be sure that the Judge of

<sup>1</sup> Ezek. xviii. 29; Gen. xviii. 23-25.



all the earth will do right, not merely in His own eyes but in those of all his intelligent creation; of the angels who stand round his throne, of the redeemed who rejoice in their acceptance, of the very damned who listen to their sentence.

What is our question? It is this. Is pain, inflicted through eternity, endured without any hope of an end, no nearer to its close when numberless cycles have passed than when the first groan was uttered,—is such a *just punishment* for any conceivable amount of sin committed by the worst of men? Man did not ask for life: it was given him without his knowledge or consent. Can any abuse of this unasked-for gift justify the recompense of an existence spent in unending agony?

We must put the question on its proper grounds. The ablest modern defenders of eternal life in hell have put it on a false issue. They have done so in two main respects, urged on by their inability to justify their theory in its naked light. The first of these we will give in the words of William Archer Butler, whose view is adopted by Dr. Salmon, Professor Mansel, and others. ‘*The punishments of hell,*’ says Butler, ‘are but the perpetual vengeance that accompanies *the sins of hell*. An eternity of wickedness brings with it an eternity of woe. The sinner is to suffer for everlasting, *but it is because the sin itself is as everlasting as the suffering.*’<sup>1</sup>

It may fairly be questioned whether, according to any principles of Divine or human law, the lost in hell are *capable of sinning.*<sup>2</sup> We do not believe they are. Out of and beyond all law, they are incapable of transgressing law.<sup>3</sup> But independently of this, it is sufficient to say of the above fearful view that it contradicts the Scriptures. Not once or twice, but over and over again, it tells us that *the punishment of the future is for the sins of the present time.*<sup>4</sup> If we think it too great, we are not at liberty to throw in the sins of the future, real or imaginary, to justify the punishment of the future. If we cannot defend man’s future treatment as being a just award for his present conduct, we cannot justify it at all. It is a piece of the coolest effrontery for us to present as a reason for God’s conduct what God has not Himself presented when explaining to man His judicial conduct. Just fancy an earthly judge sentencing a criminal to a punishment too severe for the offense

<sup>1</sup> Butler’s W. A., Sermons, 2nd series, on ‘Everlasting Punishment.’ Salmon’s, Dr., ‘Sermons,’ p. 10; Mansel’s ‘Bampton Lectures,’ pp. 22–23; 225, 226. Pollok’s ‘Course of Time,’ B. x., Dwight’s ‘Theology,’ Sermon, clxii. <sup>2</sup> See Article ‘Sin.’ Fairbairn’s ‘Imperial Bible Dictionary.’ <sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 4. <sup>4</sup> Matt. xxv. 41, 42; Rom. ii. 6; 2 Cor. v. 10.

committed, and then gravely justifying his sentence by the observation that the criminal *would be sure to deserve it all by his conduct in gaol!* Yet such is the judicature, unworthy of a Jeffreys, which learned professors of theology and doctors of divinity ascribe to the Judge of the whole earth!

Nor does it relieve God in the smallest measure from the charge of injustice to say that future punishment will but follow that law of nature which inextricably links together sin and misery.<sup>1</sup> We will not allow the believer to shield himself under the cant of modern infidelity. The laws of nature are the laws of God. For all their consequences, after they have worked their uniform work for ages, He is just as responsible as when He first ordained them, or as when He departs from them by an alteration of law or a miraculous interference. So Bishop Butler argues in the place above referred to. If the laws of nature were to bring on the sinner a punishment greater than his sin deserved, it is God Himself who would be doing so.

The simple question then is, could man by any conduct here deserve to suffer throughout eternity pain and torment to which only the worst pain he suffers here can afford a true parallel? Would the agonies to which the martyr was subjected for an hour be only sufficient for the sinner if drawn out through the eternal age? Would it be just in God to inflict this on any single creature of his hand, on any being who would never have had life at all if the Maker had not called him from his clay? The verdict of the human heart—in its fierce denial—in its secret recoil—answers No. ‘Eternal pain,’ says Augustine, ‘seems harsh and unjust to human sense.’ ‘With the majority of men of the world,’ says Butler, ‘this doctrine seems, when they think at all about it, monstrous, disproportioned, impossible.’ It seems so, in the same writer’s mind, to others besides men of the world, to men who do not fear this doom for themselves; ‘it would blanch the intellect,’ reduce the mind of the Christian to a state of idiocy, deprive him of life, were he but ‘adequately to conceive it.’<sup>2</sup> If God were now to ask man whether his conduct on this hypothesis were just, man would with one voice reply that it was not.

The history of human religious thought shows man’s ineradicable sense of the burning wrong of this fearful theory. If Plato,

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Butler’s ‘Analogy,’ chap. ii.; Mansel’s ‘Bampton Lectures,’ pp. 22. 3. Salmon’s ‘Sermons,’ p. 9. <sup>2</sup> Augustine’s ‘City of God,’ xxi. 12.; Butler’s, W. A., ‘Sermons,’ pp. 376-383.



deriving his inspiration from Egypt, taught a Tartarus with its fiery streams whence none could come forth, he taught it for an infinitesimally small portion of men. For most—even for the homicide, the parricide, and the matricide—he had his Acherusian Lake, whence, after a purgative process, they issued forth again to the upper air. If Augustine adopted his great master's abode of unending pain, he adopted also his purgatory, from whence there was a way to heaven. If the Church of Rome has sanctioned the theory of Augustine, she practically holds out its terrors only to those without her pale of safety: for her own millions she has, at the worst, the fires of a finite period. The assertion of Augustine's hell did but drive the gentler mind of Origen to the notion of a wider purgatory than Rome's or Augustine's, where even devils should be prepared to resume their place in heaven. The Churches of the Reformation have generally followed Augustine in his hell and denied his purgatory, but at all times within their bosom has been a struggle against the dominant doctrine, and even from those who maintained it it has generally commanded only a sullen, uncheerful assent. Such men as Tillotson, Robert Hall, Isaak Taylor, Albert Barnes, while they accepted the theory loved it not. We constantly find its recent defenders candidly confessing that with all their hearts they would wish that it was a lie.<sup>1</sup> The modern mind, shaken in religious faith, denies the inspiration of a book which is supposed to teach the monstrous creed. With those who will not throw away their faith in man's future, the theory of Origen, with all its consequences, bids fair, if only confronted with the fearful nightmare of Augustine, to take the place which the authority of the latter father has so long given to his views. The modern defenders of Augustine's theory shrink from putting forward a vindication of it in its plain and hideous aspect. One after another of the arguments on which it has heretofore been defended they have abandoned as unworthy of their reason, or abhorrent to their sense of justice.<sup>2</sup>

Our view needs no vindication, does not compel us to keep it discreetly in the background, reduces us to no subterfuge to escape its consequences. It does not force us to advance arguments which we feel unworthy of a child, or faintly to defend

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Salmon's 'Sermons,' Preface; 'Religious Tendencies of the Times,' by J. Grant, vol. 1, p. 234. <sup>2</sup> Tillotson's Sermon on 'Everlasting Punishment;' Dr. Salmon's 'Sermons,' pp. 9, 47; Sherlock, W., on 'Future Punishment.' Introduction.



the justice of a procedure which our heart whispers to us is only worthy of hell. By it the next life's dealings with the sinner will but follow the analogy of this. He who scans the course of nature may by it anticipate that future course which Revelation opens to our view. According to it *God's ways with the sinner are equal*. They are severe, but they are just. They are full of awe, but they can be contemplated with calmness. They show the award of a justice in whose consequences we can rejoice. Their issue in eternal death, if it brings the sigh of sadness, brings also the deep full breathing of infinite relief. We require neither the 'purgatory' of Augustine nor the 'universal restoration' of Origen. Looking on the calmed face of death, we will say, 'it is well.' The woes, the agony, the despair of life are passed away from its features with the sin that produced them.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *ORIGIN, DURATION, AND END OF EVIL.*

IN THE predicted extinction of evil we have another conclusive proof of the truth of our theory. Evil is not to be eternal. We are told in God's Word that it has had a beginning and shall have an end. Neither the Manichæism of Manes, asserting for evil an eternal past and future, nor the Semi-Manichæism of Augustine, asserting for it an eternal future, is true. God has pledged his word and his power that it shall be abolished and destroyed. He has promised a '*restitution of all things*' by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. A time shall come when the wicked shall not be, when his place shall nowhere in God's world be found. A time shall come when all things shall once more be 'very good,' when iniquity shall have an end, when the pure eyes of God shall no more be offended by its sight. A time shall come when they who would not glorify God shall be silent in darkness, and when everything that has breath shall praise the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Here the theory of Augustine is at direct issue with Scripture. The theory of Origen indeed provides an extinction of evil, and in this point lies its great and only strength. It is, however, set

<sup>1</sup> Acts iii. 21; Ps. xxxvii 10; Hab. i. 13; 1 Sam. ii. 9; Ps. cl. 6.

aside on other grounds. But here the theory of eternal life in hell contradicts the whole tenor of the Bible. It denies the restitution of all things. It asserts that evil shall be eternal in God's world, and that iniquity shall never have an end. It tells us that God's eyes shall throughout eternity be offended with the sight of evil and his ears pained with the sounds of blasphemy. It denies that the wicked will ever be silent in darkness, and that everything that has breath shall praise the Lord. It sets apart a portion of God's universe, not for the destruction of evil, but for its everlasting preservation. According to some of its advocates the evil existing in fallen spirits and reprobate men will receive constant accession throughout all future ages, so that it may become doubtful whether good or evil predominates in a world over which an omnipotent and holy God is allowed by these men to reign.<sup>1</sup>

Our theory fully answers the requirements of Scripture. It teaches a restitution of all things, and an extinction of evil. To us it seems to do even more than this. It appears to afford a reason for what after all is the grand mystery in connection with evil, viz: *its permission for any period in God's world.* The origin of evil is accounted for by the freedom of will which belongs to all creatures of loftier nature and nobler destiny than the brutes. The obliteration of evil is provided for in the Scriptural truth of eternal death for all evil-doers who have not been restored to God. The permission of evil for the period of time from the angelic fall to the final consummation of all things is therefore the chief problem to be solved in the history of evil. Faith in such a God as we have tells us that the permission of evil must have some wise gracious end in view:

Oh, yet we trust that *somehow* good  
Will be the final goal of ill.

We will now endeavor to show that such is the goal of ill, though our theory leads us to a different conclusion from that which Tennyson would fain arrive at in his exquisite 'In Memoriam.'

We must ever keep in mind *the great object of punishment.* With a just ruler this object is never pain inflicted in a spirit of hatred, or pain greater than the offense deserved. With a just ruler *retribution*, no doubt, is *an end*, but it is *the least end*

<sup>1</sup> Letter of C. H. Waller. 'The Rock' of December 29, 1868.

of punishment.' His great end is *prevention*. In the punishment of offenders he always has more regard to the law-keepers than to the law-breakers. Protection to the former in their lawful callings; warning to them against the imitation of crime; these are the great ends aimed at by wise and just rulers in punishment of actual crime. Regard to these will be the great ruling motive in the regulation of punishment. Regard to these will operate *most powerfully* on the treatment of the criminal. At one time it will demand a sternness in punishment all but productive of actual injustice to the individual punished. Regard for society may, in another aspect, mitigate to a most serious extent the punishment justly due to his crime. But regard to society in all its branches and all its interests is the grand aim in all wise human legislation on crime; and that legislator has shown the highest wisdom who, while never transgressing the limits of justice, has so arranged his penal code that it has had the greatest effect possible in protecting the law-respecting community in their minutest rights, and providing that they shall never degenerate into the condition of the law-breaking classes. All severity, short of injustice, is not only wise but is *most merciful*, that has this effect.

Now it is in this light that we are to view future punishment, together with that long permission of evil, with all its attendant circumstances, its glitter, its pleasures, its supposed advantages, its delusiveness, its pains, which we have seen in the history of our own race as well as in our partial glimpses into the history of a higher, and which will doubtless in all their real bearing remain on eternal record in the annals of God's great world. To say that what we call the fall of angels was the first appearance of moral evil, is to say what cannot with certainty be affirmed. All that we can say with certainty is that it was the beginning of that outburst of moral evil with which we are connected, and in which, as regards us, the redemption of Christ has interposed. Our opinion is that the outburst of evil, which began with the angelic fall and spread on to the fall of man, is positively the first appearance of moral evil in the universe of God. But we cannot here dogmatise. What we are much more strongly persuaded of is that, if not the first, it will be the last. We know from Scripture that this outburst of evil will be obliterated and become extinct. We think we see, with almost equal certainty, that evil will break out no more.

But God, in dealing with the higher order of his creatures, is



dealing, not with lifeless matter, not with living things walking by a law of necessity, but with living creatures under the high and elevating, but also *most perilous condition of a free will*. Free to choose the good, and rise on the wings of goodness to God its source, and to enjoy the immortality of God. *As free* to choose the evil, and sink beneath its weight to depths of utter darkness. Nor is this an imaginary evil, a theoretical possibility, to be discussed as a school problem, but never to be met with in reality. Angels—we know not how many, but we know that they are many—who once walked in holiness, used their free will to range themselves in opposition to God. Man, a weaker and a lower creature, yet inexperienced and unsuspecting, also uses his free will to depart from God. And so, in these various ways, in these various shades of original guilt, sin entered into God's universe, and produced evil effects, of which we know something from what we daily hear and see, but whose full consequences are only known to God.

But this is not all. There is the very same possibility and danger of further fall that there ever was. It may be that the angelic world of past creation are so fortified and strengthened by what they have already seen of the evil of sin that with them there is no moral possibility of further fall. But we have no reason for supposing that among the spheres are no creatures such as we. Nor have we the smallest reason for supposing that God has come to the limit of his creative energy and will. He is not the inactive God of an Epicurean philosophy, reposing in dreary self-satisfied contemplation. He is a God who delights to be at work, and the spirit he breathes into all is a love of work.<sup>1</sup> Look at the earth. It affords innumerable evidences of his busy hand and brain. Look at the stars. Doubtless they show the same ceaseless energy of God. But we know that He is not content with the creation only of the lower organizations. He delights to form creatures that know with a conscious love their Maker, and in this knowledge rise higher and higher, nearer and yet more near to their source. Who can place limits to the future expansion of our race when the consummation has come? Who can say with any faint shadow of probability that God will close his creation with man? Even while we write, or while we read, there may be reproducing in some distant planet, whose geological changes have come to their required perfection, the fac-simile of the scene in Eden six

<sup>1</sup> John v. 17.

thousand years ago. Or who can say that it may not be ours as the ages of our blessed future roll on—our own days of marrying and giving in marriage existing only in the memory—to see what angels saw here once, a figure of noble front and faultless form rising from the earth in the majesty of perfect manhood, and God placing in his thrilling grasp the hand of woman as lovely in face as she is innocent in mind, and saying in words that should cover with shame all who derogate from God's holy ordinance of marriage, 'Increase and multiply, and replenish the world I have given you.'

But these are races made under free will! It may be that some of them in their beginning are no higher than we were in ours. Eve does not seem to have been before the fall much wiser than she was after it. A woman without guile, without suspicion, without experience, loving, curious, credulous. Do you reject the picture? It is not ours: it is what we see on the canvas of Scripture. Adam was apparently in much resembling many of his sons. Ardent, hasty, impetuous, at a beautiful woman's solicitation he threw away, with open eyes, duty and loyalty: without her he will not live—with her he will die. And what were the consequences? We read them—outside Eden, in the Deluge, at Sodom, in Potiphar's house, in the wars of Canaan, on the hill of Calvary, at the siege of Jerusalem, in the shouts of the Goths and Vandals, in the Crusaders' wars, in the massacre of Bartholomew, in the snows of Russia, in the glittering scenes of heartless vanity, in the morbid passions and stunted affections of conventual imprisonment, in the gambling tables of Baden, in the lust markets of Paris and of London. We read them in our world's history of crime, and sin, and sorrow, and death.

Now the divine code of punishment, from the expulsion from Eden and the growth of the thistle down to the closing punishment of hell, has regard to the various, complicated, and universal interests of the higher creation, wherever it may now or will hereafter exist. It is not solely, we say it is not chiefly, for those to whom it shall be said—'Depart into everlasting fire.' We are by no means prepared to say that if fallen man, aye, and even fallen angels, had alone been in question, their treatment by God might not have been widely different. Had they alone been in question we dare not confine the efforts at their recovery to those which have been actually made. Christ might in that case have taken hold of angels, instead of putting forth redemp-



tion only for the sons of Abraham. Man's day of grace might not in that case have been confined to his life here from the cradle to the grave, but grace might have followed him on from age to age, and world to world, ere it ceased to strive to win back those who had once offered to God the pure incense of a creature's praise, who had once felt the ennobling emotion of the heart's love and worship of God.

*So it has not been.* Angels fell. No saving hand was stretched from the throne to raise them up; no Son of God went forth to war for them. Man fell. The Son rose up from the place of honor, and said to his Father, 'Here am I, send me,' and He laid aside his majesty, and He emptied himself, and He became a man, and for man He bore shame, and rejection, and the death upon the cross. 'Not in vain,' sounds forth the voice of grateful love which has been growing and swelling from the small voice outside the gates of Eden to the voice of many waters within the gates of the New Jerusalem. But how many left behind! How many voices silent! How many pulsations of life stilled for evermore!

Now, what we say is this. Doubtless with a merciful view to others—to others, perhaps, as far exceeding the number of the lost as the sands of all old ocean's shores exceed those of its smallest strand—has the punishment of the various classes consigned at the Judgment to hell been decreed. In that of angels will be seen *the danger of one irrevocable step*, where no hand was put forth to save, where, perhaps, no wish was ever felt to return. As regards men, some in all ages, even the darkest, were saved from the effects of a step which, in their case, was not irrevocable; but how various the degrees of guilt and opportunity among others, all of whom yet endured one irrevocable sentence! To some Christ was preached with all the circumstances that could win back the heart, with all the earnestness that could secure the love. No response came from that wilful heart; it closed up all the avenues that could lead to repentance, and went on resolutely to perdition. 'But,' it might be suggested, 'at least there will be such an effort made; we shall not, if we fall, find ourselves ushered into a doom of which we know little beyond what some faint indistinct fears and misgivings may darkly insinuate.' Yet even such God's dealings with our race show us may be the case. For ages He left the generations of the world *to themselves*. A glimmering tradition, a darkened conscience, nature's indications



of a Great Being in whom love and, justice, and judgment, and power had each a place; these were all myriads had to guide them to the brink of that last step which each one must take for himself, and by himself, into the dark world beyond. We do not affirm or believe of the heathen that all are lost; but we do know from Scripture that, *as a rule*, their future is without hope. Light enough to condemn, but not enough to save. Light so little as to reduce their guilt to its minimum, but not to make them guiltless; and yet with this small amount of light and of guilt they endure the second and endless death. And who dares say, with Christ's words in his ears, that none of these lost ones would have heard and hailed to life eternal the words of Christ's Gospel, if they had been addressed to them by the Master or by his disciples. From Sodom and Gomorrha, from Tyre and Sidon, He tells us, souls would have sprung forth to the living call which was heard and unheeded by the callous hearts of Chorazin and Capernaum.<sup>1</sup> But no such call was heard amid the vice of Sodom: no such call mingled with the din of the mariners of Tyre, or with the beating of its waves. They sinned without law, and they perish without law; for them it will be more tolerable than for others in the day of judgment, but they will not for all that escape its endless sentence.

We acknowledge that there is *severity* in this. Augustine's sentence against such is one of the blackest tyranny and *injustice*; even in the Scriptural sentence of death there is *severity*. But we cannot quarrel with severity, if it have no taint of injustice. God tells us that He sometimes acts with severity.<sup>2</sup> If He had not told us so in his Word we should have known it from his other great Book of Nature, whose pages have been open to all eyes, and in which lessons of severity are read as it enters each age's records on its tablet of stone. Severity in the future world, if it be not unjust, is no argument against any religious theory. If any one will say it is, he must take his stand *on atheistic ground*. And poor after all is the assurance which atheism can afford. If here is life which no God gave us, who can say we might not find such a life beyond the grave? If here on earth are, as no doubt there are, places which may vie with almost any pictures of a future hell, in misery, guilt, and despair, will the atheist tell us that such may not exist in the hereafter as well? Even for him it is better to

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xi. 21.    <sup>2</sup> Rom. xi. 22.

come back to a belief in God. But with the *theist* we will allow of no argument against a theory which has in it the element of severity. Let him first eliminate severity from *his book of God, his inspired record, his infallible interpreter of divine secrets*, the roll of nature through her mighty annals, before we will hear of one word of complaint *from him*, that in the Christian's book of God there is the record of severity past or to come.

And may we not even here see mercy beaming forth? In all judgment we believe that God remembers mercy, and that mercy is kept full in mind in the judgment on fallen angels, and reprobate men of every shade of guilt. God's higher order of creation have all to walk along the perilous course of free will in order to attain each the end of their being. There are rocks, shoals, quicksands by their way. Each rock has witnessed the wrêck of some gallant ship; each shoal is strewn with fragments; each quicksand has swallowed up brave beating hearts. But straightway has risen up the beacon on the headland, the lighthouse on the reef, the deep-toned bell floating over the sands and sending its solemn warning across the treacherous waves; and fleets traverse in safety where now one and now another noble vessel had been dashed in pieces and gone down. We feel satisfied that we are not drawing on imagination for what we say. We know that in the path which race after race has to tread there is danger of falling. We know that, called to go up higher, even to the top of God's mount, they may fall headlong. We are satisfied that the divine jurisprudence regards the welfare of the great numbers as its paramount consideration. We see the important bearing of future punishment as it is revealed in Scripture, severe but never unjust, on this widely stretching interest of unbounded space, of eternal duration. We see how every shade of severity tells on some vast destiny of the future, from the severity which punishes where the hands had been vainly stretched out all the day long, and the pleading voice had been mocked at, to the severity which punishes where no clear voice had ever spoken, and where, if such a voice had spoken, it would have been heard. To none, no, not the least guilty, is wrong done when God withdraws from the dim child of savage nature, or the as dim child of the dark circles which lie within the surrounding of our most vaunted civilization, the life He withdraws from the angel above him, from the beast scarce below him. But to numbers without

number may this act, to us bordering upon injustice but never entering one hairbreadth within its domain, be an act of supremest mercy, love, and wisdom; for surely that conduct of God is most wise, most loving, most merciful, which, through a severity which the lost have ceased to feel, has made to countless others the ennobling path of free will to be as safe as to the lower creatures is their ignoble path of necessity.

Milton, in his 'Paradise Lost,' relates what he supposes may have passed in conversation between angels and our first parents before the fall. The mind of our great poet was traversing here that very line of thought which we have been endeavoring to pursue. He contemplated man without experience, yet of necessity placed in the post of danger. Eden had its joys, its peace, its progress: *it must have its peril*. Among the 'trees yielding fruit, whose seed was in themselves,' which the earth brought forth on the third day of creation, we know that there were not two trees of an after growth.<sup>1</sup> We know that it was not till after man was made that they appeared. We also know that they appeared together, growing up at the same time side by side. We know that simultaneously with the 'tree of life,' the emblem and pledge of safety, grew 'the tree of knowledge of good and evil,' the sign of a possible ruin. We know that this must be so, since man was made higher than the brutes, only a little lower than the angels. That tree of life conferring God's immortality, could not be hung with its precious fruit unless the deadly fruit of its neighbor tree hung close by. It is only saying that Eden was to man the land of free will, and therefore of a possible immortality and of as possible a death. Under such circumstances Milton brings before us Raphael relating to Adam the Angelic Fall.<sup>2</sup> It was the Angelic Architect building up before the sailor's eye the beacon on the rock. It was the Ministering Spirit telling one child of free will of the pitfall into which another and yet brighter child had fallen. It was without avail. As one race fell, so fell another; and down from that day to this, and from this day to the closing scene of earth's history, it has been seen, and will be seen, that the pathway of the higher creation is beset with danger. In life restored through Christ, in death incurred without Christ, this history of evil, in which the angelic and the human race are so blended and mixed up together, is concluded.

It may be a part of our office in the coming age to point

<sup>1</sup> Gen. i. 12; ii. 9.    <sup>2</sup> *Par. Lost*, B. v.



the moral of the marvelous parable to ears that hear it with more benefit than Adam listened to the tale brought from heaven by Raphael. We can then follow out to its close what the angel could only begin. We can then intertwine with the history of the higher race the fortunes of the lower, and carry on both to their common termination. We can tell of a race that in its fall had no redemption. We can tell of a redemption that visited another fallen race—of its miracles of grace, of its final victory—but also of its utter failure to save in unnumbered instances. We can tell them that not only obstinate guilt has its danger, but negligence, inexperience, ignorance, descending as an inheritance from generation to generation. And all this is told to races rejoicing in the first flush of that life which beats tumultuously in the new-created. If the sinner's ruin is their safety, and his destruction their safeguard against loss, then even the sinner's ruin was not in vain—even his devious footsteps have not been aimless, and we can find a great and precious truth in a Scripture at which we are sometimes inclined to stumble, that 'The Lord hath made all things for Himself, yea, even the wicked, for the day of evil.'<sup>1</sup> The great stumbling-block, the existence of evil, will be a stumbling-block no more. Evil is seen to exist, not, with Augustine, to be perpetuated for ever, but to be under the providence of the Great Sovereign and loving Father, *its own eternal destruction*.

And this conclusion of the matter will exhibit to us *the limits of that free will* into whose bounds we have ventured with hesitating step to enter. We do not think that we have done so without a guide more trustworthy than led Virgil through the realms of the Shades, or guided Dante through his Purgatory and Paradise. *The free creature can defeat Divine goodness for itself, but no further.* His own good he may refuse, his own evil he may choose, and yet there may be designs in the great scheme of Divine providence which in so doing he has unconsciously or unwillingly worked out. Such we know to be the case here. 'God maketh the wrath of man,' his sin, its end, to 'praise Him.' The sinner has, no doubt, defeated God's goodness for himself,—thrust back the proffered hand that was full of blessing,—like the sullen child retired into the darkness from the cheerful room where the fire blazed brightly, and brothers and sisters played and laughed; but he saw not a good glorious end which God brought about by his very conduct.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xvi. 4.

Other worlds behold us: other worlds hear of us. There is a universal history of creation with which the history of each part is inseparably linked. Earth's drama—its gladness and its sadness, its sin and its holiness, its life and its death, its redemption embraced and rejected—is not an unconnected episode of a great poem, but is a mighty transaction of time, in which all worlds and all beings take a share—God, and angels, and men—and which is to bear with a mighty bearing upon the ages of the future. So it is represented in Scripture. The puny sceptic, blear-eyed and short-sighted, may sneer at the thought of the trouble which our world is said to have occasioned in the councils of heaven. Not so they who stand near the throne. Angels desire to look into these things: the conversion of a sinner is joy throughout their ranks. Here in this remote sphere, things are doing and will be done which will tell on intelligences whose names and abodes will never reach our knowledge here. That fall of angels and men which free will made possible—that death among angels and men which the power of choice effected—may, working only by moral means, make in the glorious realm of freedom another fall and another death *morally impossible*. The loss of life to some, possible from their place in creation, just in the dealings of God's jurisprudence, may be pure unmitigated mercy to the greater number. The permission of evil—of evil leading to one sad result in death—may issue in another result, *the eternal and undisturbed establishment of good*.

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NOTE.—This and the following chapter have been much abridged, but the Author's language has been carefully retained.

## CHAPTER X.

### *RISE OF THE THEORY OF ETERNAL LIFE IN HELL.*

IT HAS been so often asserted that the theory of Augustine was the theory *always* held in the Christian Church, that our treatise would not be complete if we did not show that such was not the case. We wholly deny it. The doctrine of the Apostolic Church was on this question in perfect agreement with Scripture. We see this from those 'Epistles of the Apostolical Fathers' which have been preserved to our time. From beginning to end of them



there is not one word said of that immortality of the soul which is so prominent among the later fathers. Immortality is asserted by them to be peculiar to the redeemed. The punishment of the wicked is emphatically declared by them to be everlasting, and the fire which consumes them an unquenchable one; but its issue is with them, as it is with Scripture, 'destruction,' 'death,' 'loss of life.'<sup>1</sup> So it was with many of the best of the Fathers immediately succeeding. It is quite true that some of these begin to speak in philosophic language of the immortality of the soul, but they explain it either as merely signifying a stronger vitality than was possessed by the body, or as an immortality that was alienable by sin.<sup>2</sup> But their teaching in its grand conclusion is agreeable to that of Scripture. They held that the immortality originally bestowed on man by God was forfeited by his sin, and is only restored through Jesus Christ. For all men they teach a bodily resurrection, but that of the just alone do they allow to be to life everlasting. They hold that the righteous retribution due to sin, and not here visited on the sinner, shall be visited on him in hell according to his deserts. Wholly unconscious of Origen's later doctrine of the finite nature of future punishment, and the restoration of all sooner or later to God's favor, they maintain that the fire of hell is unquenchable, and its result to men and devils the utter and final loss of all being and existence. When we name Justin Martyr, Theophilus of Antioch, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus, as holding these opinions on future punishment, we have named the most learned, the holiest, and the soundest of the fathers immediately succeeding the apostolic age.<sup>3</sup>

At an early period, however, doctrine on this point began to be corrupted, and the corruption grew with a rapid growth. Of all the systems of philosophy in vogue at the time, the most sublime was that of Plato. Of a part of human nature, the soul, it took a very lofty and captivating view. It abandoned the body willingly and for ever to its dust, but it ascribed to the soul a life which should have no end.

<sup>1</sup> Apostolical Fathers, Antwerpia, 1698. Clemens Rom. *Ep.* i. ix.; xxxv.; xxxix.; xiv.; xxxv.; liii. Martyrdom of Polycarp, xiv.; ii.; xi.; xix.; Barnabas, xxi.; xv.; xx.; x.; xix.; Ignatius *ad Ephesios*, xvi.; xix.; xx.; xviii.; xvii.; *ad Magn.* i.; v.; vi.; x.; *ad Tral.* ii.; iv.; xi.; *ad Pol.* ii. Hermas Past. B. i.—i. 1; iii. 8; B. ii.—vii.; xii. 1.; B. iii.—vi. 2; viii. 6; ix. 26. <sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr, 498 A; 81 D; Irenæus, lib. v. vii. Paris, 1675. <sup>3</sup> Justin Martyr, 222 D; 345 B; 224 B; 223 C; 58 B; 264 B; 196 C; 167 D; 327 D; 41 C; 45 B; 66 C; 87 B; Theophilus Ant. 79 B; 114 D; 74 C; 103 B C D; 104 A; Irenæus *adv. Hær.* Lut. Paris, 1675—50 C; 223 D; 224 A; 284 B; 389 C; 323 C; 326 D; 493 B. Clement of Alexandria. Edinburgh, Clark, 1868, vol. 1. pp. 191; 465; 87; 298; 170; 86; 102; 199; 274.



The reader of Scripture knows how earnestly and frequently Paul warned the Church *against philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> He is the only one of the Apostles who has especially done so, as he was probably the only one of them who had any acquaintance with philosophical systems. In his warnings he does not make any exception. He does not condemn the Stoic or Epicurean schools, and exempt that of Plato, as some of the Fathers expressly affirm of him.<sup>2</sup> He prohibits with all the weight of his authority the introduction of any philosophical system or dogma into the Church. He warned that it would spoil and corrupt, not elevate or strengthen truth.

Many of the early Fathers forgot this warning of the Apostle, and it is among these precisely that we find the origin of error in the Christian Church upon the great doctrine of future punishment. Educated in Platonism, they did not like to renounce it, and flattered themselves that they might, with great advantage to the cause of Christianity, bring at least a portion of their old learning into its service. Some brought less, some more, according as they were more or less thoroughly acquainted with Christianity. But on one point they were substantially agreed. All of them, with Tertullian, adopted in the sense of Plato Plato's sentiment—'*Every soul is immortal*.'<sup>3</sup> On this point Plato took rank, not among prophets and apostles, but above all prophets and apostles. A doctrine which neither Old Testament nor New taught directly or indirectly, nay, which was contrary to a great part of the teaching of both, these Fathers brought in with them into the Church, and thus gave to the old Sage of the Academy a greater authority and a wider influence by far than he had ever attained or ever dreamed of attaining. It was in effect Plato teaching in the Church, under the supposed authority of Christ and his Apostles, doctrine subversive of, and contrary to, the doctrine which they had one and all maintained. This dogma of Plato was made the rigid rule for the interpretation of Scripture. No Scripture, no matter what its language, could be interpreted in a sense inconsistent with Plato's theory. Christ, and Paul, and John, all were forced to Platonise. The deduction of reason, half doubted by Plato himself, was by these Platonising Fathers palmed off on men's minds as the teaching of revelation.

<sup>1</sup> Col. ii. 8; 1 Cor. i. 22.    <sup>2</sup> Clement of Alex. *Mis.* b. i. c. xi.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian *de Res.* iii. 327, 111.

We have read the writings of the early Fathers on this question with carefulness. It is impossible of course to affix a date to a nameless forger, but we think it quite possible, if not probable, that the first known holder of the theory of eternal life for the reprobate was the author of the writings, known under the title of 'Clementina,' and falsely attributed to Clemens Romanus. It is indeed difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain the exact sentiments of this writer. If his work is not itself interpolated, he appears to hold directly opposite opinions in different parts of it. In one place he speaks of the soul as if it would at length be extinguished in the fire of hell; in another as if, from its essential immortality, its sufferings could have no end.<sup>1</sup> To our mind he seems to have lived at a period and a place where opinion was changing from the Apostolical to the Augustinian point of view, and that it is thus we are to account for his inconsistency. It is enough for our present purpose to note that he has fully adopted the lofty language of Plato on the nature of the human soul, and thus laid the sure foundation for that change of doctrine which he did not himself perhaps fully adopt.<sup>2</sup> This nameless forger is, so far as is known, the first maintainer of the doctrine of eternal life in hell.

We do not know whether another early forgery, known as 'The Recognitions' of Clemens, and attributed by its writer to the friend of St. Paul, was written by the author of the 'Clementina.' Here in these shameless forgeries and these vagaries of unhallowed fancy, lies the mean origin of a dogma which *now overshadows* the Christian Church.

We now come to a man who has at least the recommendation of having a name. We know his antecedents, and can form some fair opinion of what his judgment is worth. He is Athenagoras, who lived from about A. D. 127 to A. D. 190. He was born at Athens; was educated there in the philosophy of Plato; became a Christian and settled at Alexandria, where his great object seems to have been to show that Christianity and Platonism were one and the same in substance. Beyond a question, he held the doctrine of eternal life for the reprobate as it was afterwards elaborated by Augustine.

While Athenagoras, the Platonist, is at Alexandria maintaining the novel doctrine of eternal life in hell, he has a worthy

<sup>1</sup> *Clementina*, Antwerpæ, 1698. Hom. Ter. vi.; Hom. Undec. xi.

<sup>2</sup> Hom. Decima cent. xvi.; Undec. xi.

fellow-laborer in Mesopotamia in the person of Tatian, the Marcionite heretic.

In Athenagoras, Tatian, and the writer of the spurious works attributed to Clemens Romanus, we have then the earliest known advocates of the theory of eternal life in hell. But this theory required a more powerful advocate than any of the above writers, and it found it somewhat later in the person of Tertullian. A master of the Latin tongue, a powerful reasoner when not led away by his peculiar errors, of a vehement nature and a vivid imagination, he was well suited to impress an idea on an age disposed to accept it, and, spite of his heresies, spite of his strange hallucinations, he left the lasting impression of his mind upon the church of succeeding times. He uses to their utmost possible latitude of meaning most of Plato's terms for the soul. It is, even in the case of the wicked, not subject to death, but must ever continue immortal. It is ever indissoluble, indivisible, an eternal substance, having the very same immortality which belongs to Deity.<sup>1</sup> But it is in the description of the endless agony of the lost that Tertullian surpassed his predecessors and threw them into the shade. He does not draw any discreet veil over his scene of punishment. Without saying that he took a positive delight in the contemplation of it, he depicts its fancied circumstances with a minuteness and a force that have only been surpassed by the imagination of Dante, or the agonizing details of a Jesuit or a Redemptorist Preacher.<sup>2</sup> Nor can we say that he was wrong, if his theory were but true. No amount of terror, horror, disgust, that could possibly be awakened here in the human mind could be too great, if only by it a single soul could be persuaded to fly in time from this wrath to come. The delicacy that tells us that there is such a hell, but that good manners, or regard for feeling, should lead us to conceal its naked and terrible aspect, is a false delicacy which risks eternity rather than give pain for a moment. Tertullian certainly was not guilty of this false delicacy. He believed in eternal torments, and he drew faithful pictures of them. With him hell was a scene where endless slaughtering (*æterna occisio*) was being enacted, where the pain of dying was to be ever felt, but never the relief which death could bring, for death according to him could not enter into that region of endless life.<sup>3</sup> And God was the author and inflictor of this!

Let us look fairly and boldly at this. It was the root,

<sup>1</sup> 269; 346; 281. <sup>2</sup> 'History of European Morals.' W. E. H. Lecky, v. ii. p. 237. <sup>3</sup> 364 D.



and basis, and *justification* of the theory of Origen. No man can deny that God is able to destroy what He was able to create. No man can deny that God had a power to choose whether He would inflict death upon the sinner or an endless life of agony. Which would He choose—the gentler or the more fearful doom? Will you say the latter? Why? There must be a reason. Is it to please Himself? He repudiates wholly this kind of character!<sup>1</sup> His mode of dealing here contradicts it; where pain is sharp it is short. Is it to please his angelic or redeemed creation? They are too like Himself to take pleasure in such a course. Did no pity visit the Creator's bosom, they would look up into his face and plead for mercy. Is it to terrify them from sin? Would it? What is sin? Is it not pre-eminently *alienation from God*? What would alienate from Him so completely as the sight or the knowledge of such a hell as Tertullian taught? Pity, horror anguish, would invade every celestial breast. Just fancy a criminal with us. He has been a great criminal. Let him be the cruel murderer; the base destroyer of woman's innocence and honor; the fiendish trafficker in the market of lust; the cold-blooded plotter for the widow's or the orphan's inheritance. Let him be the vilest of the vile, on whose head curses loud and deep have been heaped. He is taken by the hand of justice. All rejoice. He is put to death! No. That is thought too light a punishment by the ruler of the land. He is put into a dungeon; deprived of all but the necessaries of existence; tortured by day and by night; guarded lest his own hand should rid him of a miserable life; and this is to go on till nature thrusts within the prison bars an irresistible hand, and frees the wretch from his existence. Now what would be the effect upon the community of such a course? The joy at the criminal's overthrow, once universal, would rapidly change into pity, into indignation, into horror, into the wild uprising of an outraged nation to rescue the miserable man from a tyrant, and to hurl the infamous abuser of law and power from his seat. And this is but the faintest image of what a cruel theology would have us to believe of God! Nature steps in, in the one case, and says there shall be an end. Omnipotence in the other puts forth its might to stay all such escape. *For ever and for ever!* Millions of years of torment gone, and yet torment no nearer to its close! Not one, but myriads to suffer thus! Their endless cries! Their ceaseless groans! Their

interminable despair! Why Heaven and Earth and Stars in their infinite number—all worlds that roll through the great Creator's space—would raise one universal shout of horror at such a course. Love for God would give way to hatred. Apostacy would no longer be partial but universal. All would stand aloof in irrepressible loathing from the tyrant on the throne, for a worse thing than Manichæism pictured would be seated there—the *One Eternal Principle would be the Principle of Evil.*

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## CHAPTER XI.

### *RISE OF THE THEORY OF UNIVERSAL RESTORATION.*

NOT surely without reason did Paul warn against philosophy when the admission of one philosophical dogma led good men, under the specious pretext of exhibiting the Divine justice and holiness as infinite, to paint God as a monster of unutterable cruelty. We will now see the wisdom of the Apostle's warning in the result from this same source of another school of theology which, while freeing God's character from the charge of injustice or cruelty, would probably, if generally accepted, be in its immediate consequences in this world far more injurious to truth and godliness. No language can express too strongly our conviction of the danger as well as the error of this latter view. It gilds with seductive light the ways of sin. It would, we firmly believe, if commonly believed, in a single generation reduce the morals of the world to a level with those of Sodom.

The fearful picture of God exhibited by Tertullian could not be laid in its bare horrors before the mind without drawing forth some protest. Origen came forward to utter the protestation, and it assumed the form of 'Universal Restoration.' Tertullian had consigned reprobate men and devils to endless pain in hell: Origen converts hell into a vast purgatory, and sends men and devils forth from it purified and humbled to the feet of the Great Father and to the joys which are at His right hand for evermore. It is the old story of human thought—from one extreme to its opposite. The truth always lies between the two.

Origen had seized hold of a Scriptural truth—the final extinction of evil—which was just as much a part of our



Father's revelation as Tertullian's eternity of punishment. Each had his undoubted share of truth, and if the question lay between their two systems it could never be set at rest. If Tertullian could appeal to Scripture for the overthrow of the wicked, whether men or angels, as being of an endless nature, Origen could point from the same source to a blissful coming time when all that had breath should praise the Lord.

What was there which prevented Origen from going back to the old Scriptural doctrine of death as the end of sinners, which places the two Scriptural truths just mentioned in harmony and not in opposition? It was the very same human dogma of the immortality of the soul which had led Athenagoras and Tertullian to their endless life in hell. This dogma of Plato, this creation of human reason, this tradition of men, made the revolt from Tertullian to be only the exchange of one human system for another, instead of being a return from man's heresy to God's truth.

But Origen, while he only became acquainted with the Hebrew language in his old age, was a Greek scholar from his youth. He had the advantage, which Augustine had not, of being thoroughly acquainted with the language in which the Gospel was inscribed. He knew the meaning of its terms, and that among the terms which described the future punishment of sinners who in this life rejected Christ were all the terms of the Greek language which describe the utter destruction of organization, the utter loss of life, being, an existence. What was to be done with these?

Were they to be explained away? That is what the holders of Augustine's theory have done. They put an insufficient, an inapposite, an unnatural, or a positively false meaning on the most important terms of the New Testament. With them death means life, and life means happiness, and so on. Having put these convenient meanings on the phraseology of Scripture, interpreted it as they would not dare to interpret the code of a human legislator, they can look placidly on a thousand passages which contradict what they teach from platform, and pulpit, and press, and instil into children's minds almost with their mother's milk. Origen could not, or would not, do this. He gives, as any Greek scholar not possessed with the spirit of Augustine would do, their proper force to the terms of the New Testament—the same meaning which Plato, or Euripides, or Demosthenes, or Cicero would attach to them.



We will give an example of this. Every one is familiar with the solemn warning of our Lord, 'Fear not them which *kill* the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him who is able *to destroy* both body and soul in hell.' We remark in the English version the change from 'kill' in the first clause, to 'destroy' in the second, a change exactly answering to the Greek original, which uses (*apokteino*) in the first clause, and (*apollumi*) in the second. The maintainers of Augustine's theory attempt to take advantage of a change which is in reality only a heavier blow to their system. They explain 'destroy' as a term of inferior force to 'kill.' Listen to Bengel, from whom better things might be expected. He tells us that the word 'destroy' and not 'kill' is used when the soul is spoken of *because 'the soul is immortal,' i. e. cannot die.*<sup>1</sup> Now any one who came unprejudiced to this passage of our Lord would acknowledge that every law of right reason would lead us to conclude that the force of the term in the second clause must at least equal that in the first, else the warning is diminished in its intensity. Let us hear the Greek scholar Origen on the true force of this word 'destroy.' He is commenting on 1 Cor. iii. 9, in connection with Jer. i. 10: 'See what is said to the people of God: Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building: therefore the words of God over nations and kingdoms are, To root out, and to throw down, and *to destroy*. If it be rooted out, and that which is rooted out be not *destroyed*; *that which is thrown down still exists*. It is therefore the result of God's goodness, after the rooting out *to destroy what is rooted out*, after the throwing down *to destroy what is thrown down*.' Such is the mighty power which Origen, a Greek scholar, gives to this word 'destroy.' With him it means *blotting out of all existence*, obliterating the very form and appearance. It is thus even a stronger word than 'to kill.' Death, for a time at least, leaves the shape and parts unaltered; destruction removes the organization and resemblance altogether.

But, it will be asked, if such be the true force of the words applied in Scripture to future punishment, how did Origen defend his theory of universal restoration with these meeting him in the face? Very easily. Origen never found any difficulty in Scripture. If it was for him, well and good. If it was against him, he made it without any ceremony speak as he wished.

<sup>1</sup> Bengel on Matt. x. 28.

Every reader of Scripture knows that its solemn warnings are addressed to *the sinner in person*: 'O wicked man, thou shalt surely die.' Death, Destruction, Perdition, Loss of Life—all the multiplied phrases and illustrations of the Bible are there directed against *the persons* of the wicked. Origen's simple mode of neutralizing their force is by directing them *against their sin*. And so his point is gained. Their force cannot be too strong for him, so he does not attempt to diminish it. The Augustinian, directing them correctly against the sinner, robs them of their meaning: Origen directing them against the sin, leaves them their proper sense. Both pervert Scripture, and it is difficult to say against which the charge is the heaviest.

We meet with Origen's free and easy method of Scripture everywhere throughout his writings.<sup>1</sup> Whatever be our opinion of Origen personally, of his learning, his brilliancy, even of the truth of much of his teaching, his teaching here places him among those prophets condemned by Ezekiel for 'strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, *by promising him life.*'

For the benefit of our readers we subjoin a table which will enable them at a glance to see the relative antiquity in the primitive Church of the three great theories of future punishment which are at this day maintained in the Christian Church. We are perfectly aware that in the writings of one of the Fathers whom we claim for our view, viz: Justin Martyr, are passages which appear to rank him among the holders of Augustine's theory; but we are prepared nevertheless to make good our claim to his support. In the accuracy of the table appended we fully believe: for its substantial truth we are ready to contend: and we challenge any gainsayer to controvert it. The dates given for the death of each Father are, of course, only vouched for as the most probable approximation to truth. Exactitude is now unattainable.

Eternal Death. Died A. D.	Eternal Life of Pain. Died A. D.	Universal Restoration. Died A. D.
Barnabas . . . . . 90		
Clemens Romanus . . . . . 100		
Hermas . . . . . 104		
Ignatius Martyr . . . . . 107	The Forgers of the	
Polycarp Martyr . . . . . 147	Clementina and	
Justin Martyr . . . . . 164	Recognition of Clement	
Theophilus of Antioch . . . . . 183	Athenagoras . . . . . 190	
Irenæus Martyr . . . . . 202	Tatian . . . . . 200	
Clemens Alexandrinus . . . . . 212	Tertullian . . . . . 235	Origen . . . . . 253

<sup>1</sup> Origen on Matt. x. 28, Rothomagi, 1663.

From the foregoing table we see how comparatively late the theory of Augustine appears in the remains of patristic writing, while that of Origen is later still. That blank space between them and primitive truth is fatal to both. Of Origen we now take our leave. In one grand feature of his theory he commands our entire sympathy. He looked forward to the extinction of evil. His yearning for it was true, was but following out the judgment and reason as well as the longing of every right heart. We cannot look at evil—its hatefulness, its misery, its pollution,—and think that with such a God as ours this evil will be permitted to extend or to exist for ever. So thought Origen, and Scripture bears him out. But he erred most fatally as to the means. He left the plain words of Scripture to carry out a human tradition. The inalienable immortality of the soul was the *ignis fatuus* which led this brilliant thinker through depths and over heights which weary the imagination of common minds to follow him. It compelled him to promise life where God had threatened death. His theory no doubt is very captivating, very seductive, but it is false. It is destructive of the true nobility of that nature, a false idea of whose nobility led Origen into his error. To suppose that a responsible being, capable of good and evil, may deliberately choose the latter, and deliberately continue in it, and yet that God is bound in every instance to win or force back that responsible agent to the path of life which he had forsaken, is destructive of the quality which distinguishes the higher from the lower order of creation, viz: *the freedom of their will*. God says to those whom, in making capable of knowing Him He has made capable of sharing in his own immortality—‘You may and can choose evil, and with it death.’ Origen says to them—‘You cannot, and you shall not: the evil you would choose shall be severed from you, do what you will: the good you would not have shall be forced upon you, struggle against it as you may.’ He reduces the creature made to walk in the field of freedom to the creation regulated by the iron law of necessity.



## CHAPTER XII.

## CONCLUSION.

It is very often objected to our view that it removes from the sinner all his dread of sin arising from its consequences. So far from this being the case, we believe that our view, thoroughly known, is more calculated to impress the sinner with salutary fear than the theory of Augustine.

It has often been remarked that where a punishment felt to be excessive is threatened,—it wholly fails of its effect. The criminal is satisfied that it will not be executed. It is thus with the theory of everlasting misery as a punishment for human sin. *It is practically disbelieved.* The sinner takes refuge from it in a thousand ways. The greater portion of the professing Christian Church has adopted purgatory as an escape for them from this hell. Even for those who cannot accept a purgatory the vulgar notion of hell has no practical terrors. Even if they do not reject it altogether as a mere bugbear, they do not believe in it *for themselves*. A change of life, a word of penitence at the last, a sigh of sorrow for the past as the soul is leaving its tabernacle, will surely avert *from them* a fate too terrible for a merciful God to inflict. And so the very transcendent terrors of the vulgar hell defeat the object of threatened penalty, for few, if any, believe in its infliction *on themselves*. We will not be suspected of summoning an unfair witness when we summon the modern poet of Augustine's hell to testify the sinner's universal disbelief in it:—

‘ But say, believing in such woe to come,  
Such dreadful certainty of endless pain,  
Could beings of forecasting mould, as thou  
Entitled men, deliberately walk on?  
Thy tone of asking seems to make reply,  
And rightly seems: *they did not so believe.*  
*Not one.*’

(Pollock, ‘Course of Time,’ b. viii.)

Our theory is credible, and does not remove from the sinner the salutary dread of punishment. If, indeed, we taught that *the first death* was for him an eternal sleep, we confess that we would remove from his mind all dread of punishment. But we do no such thing. We affirm for the sinner a resurrection, a

judgment, a sentence to the realm of hell, where he will suffer the due reward for his deeds ere he passes under the sad sentence of eternal death. Are there no terrors here? Is there not here enough to terrify any soul whom mere fear may lead to fly from the wrath to come? And all this is *credible*. Here in God's world is pain: here in God's world is death! The man of natural religion cannot object to finding pain and death in a life following this. We are but making the God of Nature and of Revelation one and the same Being! And are they not one and the same? We hold up before the human mind those 'terrors of the Lord' which Paul held up before the mind of Felix when he reasoned of 'judgment to come,'—that 'death' which Paul declared would be the end of sin and of sinners, and which even such minds as that of Felix feel and acknowledge to be the worthy award of evil deeds.<sup>1</sup>

And now we bring our little work to its close. Its argument has led us to the most glorious hope and expectation which a being loving God can possibly entertain—the termination of moral evil. As it is a part of our Father's revelation that evil had an origin, so we rejoice to find it another part of that revelation that it will have an end. It is not from eternity, and it will not be to eternity. It is a thing of time; and is not an essential part of the constitution of the universe. The ages to come will roll on ignorant of evil, as were those former ages before the Archangel fell. Evil will be blotted out. All God's attributes, His mercy, His holiness, His justice, His power, are pledged to extirpate it. To do so is a necessity of that nature of His which has its own binding eternal laws within itself. Hell is not the eternal abode of evil, concentrated in intensity, deepening and darkening in hue throughout eternity. It is not the everlasting exhibition of a scene with whose moral horrors all the sensuality, and deviltry, and hate, and despair that has been exhibited in earth's foulest dens could not compare. The phrenzies of Bedlam, were earth one Bedlam; the despair of suicide, were each one of earth's sons and daughters to resolve on rushing from a hatred life; the hatred of the heart, were each heart to hate as Cain when he stood by Abel in the old field of murder, or the Dominican, as he glared with demoniac hatred on the martyr he was attending to the flames: all these could not exhibit even a feeble resemblance to that which hell would present if Augustine's view were true.

1 Acts xxiv. 25; Rom. i. 32.

Thank God, it is not true. God does not contemplate *this* hell. He will indeed gather into it all things that offend—all the foul rakings of hate, and pride, and falsehood, and selfishness, and lust. But it is with the ominous purpose of Jehu, when he said, ‘Gather all the prophets of Baal, and all his priests; let none be wanting,’ and ‘the house of Baal was full from one end to another.’ So will hell enlarge her borders, and the evil of the universe shall descend into it, and fill its wide domain, to be extirpated and blotted out for ever.

Such is the hell of Scripture, the very counterpart to that fearful scene which Augustine has depicted. The very thought of this latter is too horrible to think. However ancient, it is no part of ‘the faith once delivered to the saints.’ We therefore reject it as a fable, a novelty, a monstrous doctrine worthy of the Koran, where it takes its fitting place—unworthy of the Gospel, where it finds no place. We leave it to the disciple of Mohammed, lying on his couch of sensuality, to look down with cruel delight upon a scene of unutterable and endless misery.<sup>1</sup> This is not the consummation which the disciples of Christ, or the worshippers of the Father of mercies are called on to rejoice in.<sup>2</sup> They could not look on it and rejoice; they could not regard pain as endless without feeling that unalloyed joy could never be their own.<sup>3</sup> What they rejoice in is *the destruction* of the enemies of God, because in their destruction evil and misery are for ever banished from God’s world, and God reigns supreme in the affection and the loyalty of all that breathe.

From this standpoint we contemplate the final scene of retribution. There is heaven, and there is hell. There is eternal life, and there is eternal death. The redeemed enjoy the one; the lost are the subjects of the other. The Book of Revelation describes the latter—‘Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.’<sup>4</sup> All that has been, and continued to be evil; the fallen angels who now move in earth and air; the spirits who are kept in chains of darkness; the multitudes who have died without God and without hope; the multitudes whom the last day will find impenitent and unholy, have all been consigned to one common scene of punishment. According to their deserving is their chastisement. The time for each one’s suffering over, he is wrapped in the slumber of eternal death. Gradually life dies out in that fearful prison

<sup>1</sup> Koran, C. lxxxiii. p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Psalm lviii. 10.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Victory of Divine Goodness,’ T. R. Birks

<sup>4</sup> Rev. xx. 14.



until unbroken silence reigns throughout it. They who would not find life have found death. *But the scene remains for ever.* As Sodom and Gomorrha have exhibited to every succeeding generation of men the Divine vengeance upon full-blown iniquity, so will the charred and burnt-out furnace of hell afford its eternal lesson to the intelligences of the future. As angels wing their way from world to world, as the redeemed touch with fresh delight their harps of gold, as new orders of spiritual life are called into being, so the nature and end of sin are always remembered in that scene where so many of the inhabitants of heaven and earth had bid an eternal farewell to the life of God which is so full of joy. That lesson of awe is read and pondered on by all. But it will be a lesson read without the shudder of anguish. They have drunk the waters of Lethe, 'the silent stream,' and forgotten long ago their misery. There is no eternal antagonism of good and evil, no eternal jarring of the notes of praise and wailing; evil has died out, and with it sorrow; throughout God's world of life all is joy, and peace, and love.



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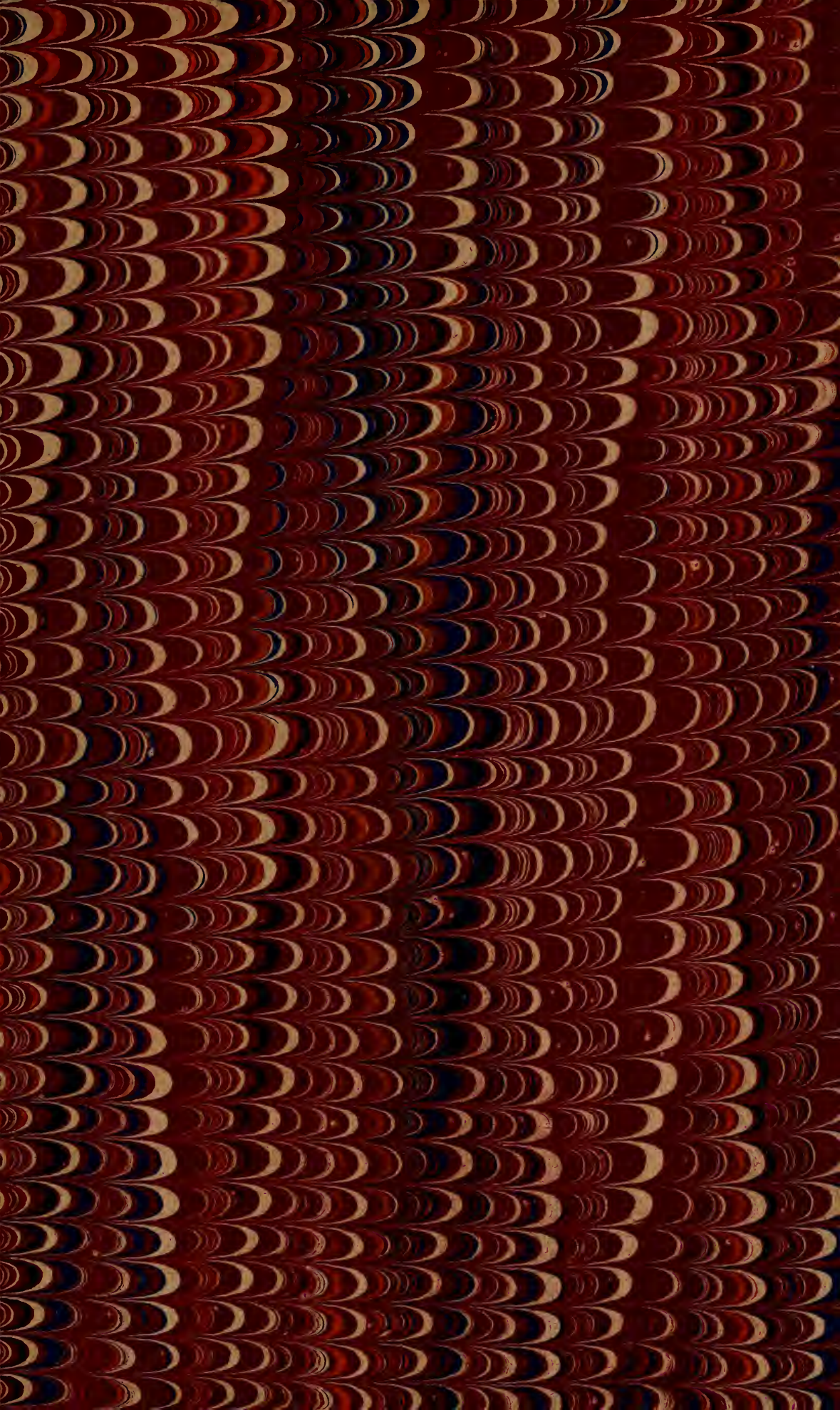


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