

IS THERE SALVATION  
AFTER DEATH?

A TREATISE ON THE

GOSPEL IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

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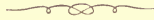
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# IS THERE SALVATION AFTER DEATH?

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## CHAPTER I.

### *INTRODUCTORY: THE QUESTION STATED.*

THE aim of this treatise is to discuss, mainly in its more obvious and vital aspects, the important question here propounded, and to supply such answers as the testimonies of Scripture, the witness of Christian symbolism, the evidences drawn from Christian theology, and the tests of religious experience may combine to furnish. In other words, what is here proposed is a solution, practical rather than speculative, of the serious problem now presented for consideration in various quarters, whether what we term the Gospel has any place or mission in the Intermediate State.

Such a discussion as is contemplated seems to require brief introductory reference to certain related truths, and also some preliminary allusion to certain other theories of change in character and condition after death.

**I. Preliminary  
inquiry as to the  
Immortality of  
Man.**

Of these related truths the first in order is the underlying fact of Immortality. — The conviction that there is a life beyond the grave, and that this future life is unending in duration, has gained a firm place in the faith of thoughtful minds in all ages, even aside from the teachings of the Christian Revelation. This conviction has rested in part on

the immateriality of the soul itself, as a simple or uncompounded essence, pervaded by a living principle which seems independent of all physical processes of change or decay. It has rested partly on the conscious possession of endowments and capacities, which appear in their own nature to be indestructible,—on the witness of the reason, the esthetic feelings, and the conscience to their inherent supremacy over the accidents and mutations of time. Further evidence has been found in that primal law of continuity manifest in our mental and moral experience, by which the full identity of the personality, with all its peculiar capabilities, is maintained throughout the vicissitudes of this earthly life. Again, the obvious survival of these spiritual capacities in undiminished vigor even while the physical man is perishing, and the instinctive yearnings of the soul, its conscious and unconquerable desire to live after death, contribute still further to this well-nigh universal conviction. And finally, the solemn sense of responsibility to some higher power, the deep monitions of conscience, and even the irrepressible anticipations of a retribution to come, testify yet more conclusively to the fundamental truth that man as man is immortal.

What is thus certified to the soul from within, is also suggested to it by certain interesting analogies in physical nature,—by what we see of life in other forms preserving itself throughout multiplied changes, as if in defiance of envioning death. Illustrations drawn from this field have often been spontaneously seized upon by the mind, in support of its innate aspiration, its inextinguishable desire. Yet, on the other hand, we must confess that nature casts her deep shadows at many points upon the hope which the soul intuitively

cherishes, and which such intimations at times strongly encourage. We still ask with trembling whether that death which is so often triumphant over life in the broad territory of nature, may not overcome the soul also, and sweep it at last despite hopes and aspirations into an irretrievable destruction. To such an inquiry, anxiously urged, there can be no really conclusive answer apart from Revelation. It is to the Word of God,—to the comforting hints and assurances of the older Scriptures, to the clearer intimations and promises of the New Testament, and most of all to the witness of Him who came to bring life and immortality to light, that we turn for the supreme and the infallible testimony. No particular array of these biblical evidences is needful here: we study the divine Word, and there in its description of man as he was originally made in the image of God, in its assurances that even his death in trespasses and sins does not imply his annihilation, in its warnings to sinners and its promises to believers, both drawn from an eternity on which saint and sinner are said alike to enter, we read the unquestionable certification of God himself to our individual immortality.

Nor is this a conditional or contingent immortality, depending for its realization on the conscious and saving experience of grace.—It is true, as our Lord has taught, (John 17:3) that Life Eternal—immortality in the supreme and perfect sense—can be enjoyed only by those who spiritually know God and the Redeemer whom He has sent. Other passages are found in the New Testament (Rom. 2:7. John 10:27–8) conveying in part at least the same conception of a holy immortality, which as a gift of grace is to be enjoyed by

**II. Immortality  
not conditional;  
Annihilationism.**

saints only. Yet unending existence is in multiplied passages (Rom. 2:8-9. Matt. 10:28. Eccl. 12:7) asserted of the sinner as truly as of those who are saved eternally through faith. The sinner like the saint lives on beyond the hour of his earthly decease, having in himself by divine bestowment an immortal subsistence, and therefore maintaining a continuous being in distinct consciousness, age on age, eternally. No theory of human nature as dichotomic in the case of sinners and tripartite in the case of believers, can be sustained, either from the Scriptures or from consciousness.<sup>1</sup> The same body and soul, or body and soul and spirit, which belong to the saint belong in measure as full and complete to the unbeliever also. The story of the creation of man as man in the divine image, the narrative of his complete fall from that high condition, the faithful record of his career as a sinner, all alike imply that in a state of sin as in a state of grace, he is endowed with enduring life. Moreover, the change which regeneration induces, is not the introduction of another consummating element into our human nature, but rather the restoration of that nature as it is, with all its native parts and powers, into holy harmony and into blessed fellowship with God in Christ, through the Holy Ghost.

But the term, Annihilationism, in the stricter sense, implies not a bare form of existence for the wicked in contrast with a special and gracious mode of being for the godly, but rather an actual extinction of all life for-

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<sup>1</sup>HEARD, *Tripartite Nature of Man*: Ch. XIII. While the trichotomic theory cannot, in view of Heb. 4:12. 1 Thess. 5:23. 1 Cor. 15:44, and some other passages, be pronounced anti-scriptural (as in HODGE, *Theol.* II:47), the use of the distinction between soul and spirit in the way here indicated is wholly without biblical warrant. The spiritual mind is not a superadded faculty, but a native endowment graciously spiritualized.

ever in the case of those who have sinned against God and his grace. Such an extinction may occur, it is suggested, either at death or after some terminable period of retributive suffering, or at the day of final judgment. It is asserted that the strong language of the Bible respecting the perishing, the destruction, the blotting out of the ungodly (*ἀπόλλυμι* and its derivatives) can mean nothing less than absolute cessation, not of consciousness merely, but of being itself. It is held that the corresponding term, eternity, (*αἰών*, and its derivatives) should be taken as applied to the wicked, in the limited sense of a fixed period—a period which, however prolonged, will finally end somewhere. It is also argued speculatively that sin, being a mere disorder and having no permanent ground of existence, may be terminated forever, carrying away with it the soul that indulges it,—that the goodness of God toward the universe may lead him to withdraw his sustaining hand, and suffer the incorrigibly wicked to drop altogether out of existence,—that the welfare and final triumph of divine government would be best secured by such retributive destruction of every rebel against God. And it is further argued that such a result, if it should occur, would relieve us forever from the dreadful alternative of everlasting sin and everlasting condemnation, and would at the same time present immortality and fullness of life to our minds as the legitimate and proper and also the glorious reward of all the righteous for evermore.

The biblical answer to these reasonings is conclusive. The strong expressions such as perishing, destruction, blotting out, found in both the Old Testament and the New, can not always be interpreted as implying absolute extinction. In multiplied instances (Matt. 10: 6, 39. 1 Cor. 3:17. 2 Thess. 1:9) they refer to tem-



poral loss or failure, or also to spiritual failure or loss, which may fall very far short of the annihilation here contemplated.<sup>1</sup> We shall also have occasion to see that the terms descriptive of eternity can not be so reduced as to represent a fixed and terminable period however prolonged, without destroying the foundations on which our pious hope of the life everlasting is based. Further examination of the Bible will satisfy the candid mind that nothing short of absolute immortality for the wicked as truly as for the righteous will adequately interpret its solemn declarations,—especially those relating to the state and place of departed spirits, and to the final resurrection of the just and of the unjust. Over against these decisive declarations, corroborated by the almost universal conviction of those who receive the Scriptures as divine, the biblical argument for the annihilation of the ungodly can not well sustain itself in our respect.

And if we turn from Scripture into the field of speculative inquiry, we shall there find much to offset and outweigh this illusive theory. All the arguments for immortality, from whatever source, may be thrown into the scale against it; science itself resists the conclusion that the soul is thus perishable, as material organizations are. Moreover, if the goodness of God would be exalted on this hypothesis, this must be secured at the expense of his wisdom, since the absolute destruction of a race of beings whom He had once made for Him-

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<sup>1</sup> “There is absolutely no ground for identifying the words destroy, perish, and their cognates, as used by the N. T. writers, with the cessation of conscious existence. As used by them they speak (1) of a state of failure, ruin, frustration not necessarily irremediable, and (2) of physical death.” PLUMPTRE, *Spirits in Prison*; App. on Conditional Immortality. For the annihilationist view, see especially WHITE, *Life in Christ*. HUNTINGTON, *Conditional Immortality*.

self, could be little else than an entire frustration of his original plan in their creation. Nor could the equity of his government be sustained before the moral universe, by a process which allowed the sinner to escape from a measure of penalty justly due to human transgression. Nor again, could our sense of the preciousness of immortality, or our enjoyment of the beatific vision of God, be magnified by any contrast with the indescribable awfulness of such a consummation as that here proposed. Neither is the awful conception much improved by the admission of some intermediate punishment antecedent to a final catastrophe and destruction at the day of judgment, since such intermediate punishment would present difficulties to the speculative understanding hardly less serious than those which the orthodox view is supposed to involve.

Accepting then as fundamental the doctrine of both reason and Scripture, that immortality is the proper heritage of man as man, we are brought at once to another preliminary inquiry respecting the general mode or condition of the soul in what is termed the intermediate state—the period between death and the final resurrection. A brief answer to this inquiry seems essential to a right appreciation of the special question hereafter to be discussed:

**III. General  
Mode of Existence  
after Death.**

A solution of all problems concerning this intermediate state is suggested in the theory that at death the soul passes into a condition of unconscious being of which sleep is the nearest natural analogue, and that it remains in this condition under the preserving care of God, much as the corporeal life is somehow preserved in existence by Him, until the supreme moment when,

before the final judgment, these two vital elements or factors in each person are called forth into distinct life again, and are joined together in a combination which is perfect and perpetual. It is urged that if this hypothesis be accepted, every question respecting the state of the dead prior to the resurrection, such as the problem of corporeity, of purgatory, of probation, of possible redemption after death, would be at once excluded.

The biblical argument for this unique hypothesis is derived mainly from the frequent comparisons of death to sleep, (Matt. 9: 24. John 11: 11-14. 1 Cor. 11: 30. 1 Thess. 4: 14) from some descriptions of the resurrection, which suggest an awaking of the spirit as well as the body from the deep slumber of death, (Dan. 12: 2. 1 Cor. 15: 51-2. 1 Thess. 5: 10) and from certain references to the final or general judgment, as the time when the awards of eternity are first meted out to men. From these three classes of texts, especially, it is inferred that the intermediate state is not in any sense a state of reward and retribution, or even a condition of further discipline or purgation, but is simply a long night of repose, during which the soul, wrapped in deep unconsciousness, knows nothing of the passage of time, and is even unaware of its own existence, but rests somewhere in the merciful care of God until the eternal morning shall break upon its vision. *WHATELY: Future State: Lect. IV.*

To these conclusions based on certain declarations or intimations of Scripture, there is added a series of speculative considerations such as the following: The conscious and active being of the soul apart from the body seems, it is said, an inexplicable mystery,—especially when we call to mind the numberless ages during which such an anomalous mode of existence may continue.

Further, the passage of the soul into a state of complete quiescence is no greater marvel than the commitment of the body to the solemn sleep of death: and the same power which can keep the body in its earthy bed and at length call it forth into renewed life, can also both preserve the soul and awaken it again. Moreover, such a night of rest may have some such relations to the revivifying and larger enduing of the soul for its eternal career, as healthful sleep sustains to our increased activity and usefulness from day to day on earth. Such a slumber, it is added, can involve no real loss to a soul which still has a whole eternity before it, and which has no consciousness of the passage of time during this intermediate period. And besides this, it is further urged, the reward or the punishment of souls apart from their bodies seems on the one hand imperfect and insufficient in itself, and on the other appears to render a general judgment at the close of the world both needless and inexplicable.

To the biblical proof abundant answer may be found in the words of our Lord himself. His argument in Matt. 22: 23-32, corroborated as it is by the narrative of the transfiguration. (Matt. 17: 1-9; also Mark and Luke) is evidence conclusive that the patriarchs not only existed, but existed in full consciousness, at least during the period of His Messiahship. The parable of Dives and Lazarus can be fitly interpreted only on the supposition that He who uttered it believed in the conscious existence of men, not at and after the judgment, but immediately at and after death. His promise to the dying thief also, pledging to him an immediate paradisaic experience in such strange contrast with the mortal pains which the criminal was then and there suffering, can be explained on no other supposition. With these

teachings of Christ the language and testimony of Paul (2 Cor. 5: 1-8. 2 Tim. 4: 6-8 and elsewhere) are in complete harmony. And to these may be added the representations of the Apocalypse (Rev. 5: 6-10. 7: 9-17) in regard to the state, employments, felicities of the blessed dead,—representations which are wholly inexplicable on the theory that all the souls of all the dead are existing somewhere in unconscious slumber, and that they are to remain in that condition, and with them all the souls of men that shall die during the long ages of the future, until the remote dawning of the resurrection day.

So far as the speculative considerations suggested are concerned, we may find ready answer in such facts as these: The existence of the spirit apart from the body, however mysterious, is clearly not impossible, since God and the holy angels so exist: corporeal existence may not be in any measure so needful to active and conscious life as we are prone to regard it. The same divine power which now enables the soul to act within and through a corporeal frame, may enable it to act as readily without one: or, as some have urged, may provide for it some spiritual body with which the soul may be both clothed upon, and capacitated for active existence.<sup>1</sup> Neither can we well conceive of such an innumerable multitude of spirits endowed with immortality,

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<sup>1</sup> TAYLOR, *Physical Theory of Another Life*. This view is based upon the striking passage, 2 Cor. 5: 1-4, and a few other biblical suggestions. HICKOK, *Humanity Immortal*, (p. 303,) suggests the conception of a spiritual body in man, distinct from his physical or psychical body, which is indissoluble at death, and which the author describes as "a body of living light, and a free citizen of the etherial universe," from the moment of death onward. One recalls here the touching apostrophe of the dying Emperor Ha-

thus kept through uncounted ages in entire unconsciousness, in reserve for a remote judgment,—the righteous waiting thus interminably for a reward, and the ungodly for a condemnation which are even at that day to be determined according to the deeds done in the body. Moreover, the notion that the soul needs after its brief earthly life such a prolonged rest as this, seems strangely incongruous with its immaterial nature and its native powers, and out of harmony with the universal anticipations of men. And finally, this opinion derives its chief strength from what must be pronounced an unscriptural conception of the final judgment,—since that day of days is designed not so much to decide upon the character of individual souls, as to justify the sovereign ways of God with mankind, and to make His administration and his scheme of grace glorious forever in the eyes of the moral universe.

That this intermediate condition is one of comparative incompleteness is indeed obvious. Death certainly involves what has been called a dismemberment of the manhood, with a consequent cessation of all activities arising from the bodily organism, and a corresponding retirement of the soul within the sphere of its own rational and spiritual being. The conceptions of space and time mainly give way: outward relationships are doubtless in some degree retired from view: the soul

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drian to his soul,—a strange intermingling of sensuous earthliness and cynical skepticism on one hand, and of solicitous anguish and aspiration on the other:

Animula vagula, blandula  
 Hospes comesque corporis,  
 Quæ nunc abibis in loca,  
 Pallidula, rigida, nudula,  
 Nec, ut soles, dabis jocos?

becomes largely quiescent and centered within itself, and the life of which it is conscious comes to be in large degree an era of relative inaction, and in the case of the believer, of holy and blessed calm. In the case of the sinner, such a condition must at once be regarded as unfavorable to radical changes in character during this period: the soul seems the rather thrown back on itself, and held to the contemplation of its own sinfulness, and to the experience of such remorseful feeling as such contemplation may awaken into throbbing activity. As much as this appears to be intimated at least in the biblical comparison of death with sleep, and in the cognate description of the intermediate state (John 9: 4) as in contrast with the present day of life, a night when no man can work.

Yet such conceptions of this state as passive and introvertive have their proper biblical counterpoise in those frequent allusions, especially in the New Testament, to the soul as active as well as conscious while in this condition of dismemberment. While, for example, we accept the Pauline description of death as a holy resting forever with the Lord, freed from the disturbances of this earthly state, are we not also permitted with him, and with Peter and John, to contemplate this condition as one of holy union and communion with the Redeemer, of cordial and ceaseless worship, of positive service and ministry rendered to Him? It is not enough, in the stronger light of the New Testament, to conceive of the life of the holy dead as being such a beatific monotone as the less distinct teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures habitually describes it. The Apocalyptic delineations introduce us rather to the vision of a great multitude of thoroughly vital spirits, not resting always or always waiting merely for the redemption of their bodies, but

continually full of movement and activity, of conscious energy and augmented life.<sup>1</sup>

But whatever may be true as to the relative measure of incompleteness and introvertiveness characteristic of the intermediate state, we may rest in the general conclusion that this state is one of conscious and active being on the part of every one who enters upon it,—that while the body sleeps within the earth, the soul is even more truly alive than when it inhabited its corporeal form,—and that its experiences are as real, as cognizable, as effectual and important, as any through which it may have passed on its way through the brief realm of time to that more permanent abode. The Christian has no occasion to fall back on the dim anticipation of the expiring Hadrian: the soul to his view is far more than a rigid, pallid, glassy essence flitting vaguely, nubilously, through the empty spaces of eternity. Neither can the natural man, who has once seriously contemplated his future condition in the revealing light of the Bible, anticipate for himself any other than a vivid, active, essentially spiritual existence in the intermediate state, in real fellowship with all the dead, consciously beneath the eternal eye of Deity.

From this brief consideration of the preliminary problem of existence and of conscious existence after death, we may pass on to a more immediate question, which still is by its nature introductory to the special problem here to be considered,—the question of character and condition in the intermediate state.—It must be confessed that the eyes of most who contemplate the future

**IV. Character and condition in the Intermediate State.**

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<sup>1</sup> EVANS, LL. J., Prof.: *Intermediate State*: Presbyt. Review, April, 1887. ALFORD, *State of the Blessed Dead*.



life, are fixed much more definitely on the element of condition than on the supreme and determinative element of character. There is much in current opinion and teaching which tends to cultivate such a tendency. Popular theology, for example, has emphasized greatly, even unduly, the miseries of one class of the dead, and the felicities of another,—the fierce agonies of hell, and the beatific joys and glories of heaven. The evangelical pulpit is accustomed to descant largely, even disproportionately, upon such peculiarities of place, condition, environment, as if these constituted the main characteristics of life in eternity.<sup>1</sup> So the terms, *lost*, *saved*,—terms having indeed full warrant in the Scriptures, and properly descriptive of a reality which no terms less pregnant with meaning could sufficiently depict,—are often used in such connections as if they referred, not at all to a state of the soul itself, but rather to an estate

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<sup>1</sup>Especially is it noticeable that in much of the current discussion respecting probation after death, the fundamental problem of character is in a large degree ignored by the advocates of that dogma, and the matter of condition pushed into undue prominence as if the main question were to be settled on the basis, not of inner worthiness, but of circumstantial happiness. Farrar, for illustration, (*Eternal Hope*, Sermon III.) summons all his rhetorical skill into service to depict, in ghastly and startling colors, what he regards as the evangelical view of the torments of hell. He quotes from Jonathan Edwards and other authors every material or physical image that can make the picture of the condition of the lost more horrid; and then asks whether it be possible to hold such a belief. On the other hand, he reduces the element of sin to the lowest terms, ignores largely the underlying problem of character, asserts every thing short of absolute innocence for the mass of those thus condemned, waives aside the demands of moral government, and the claims of justice; and then repeats his question—as if the issue were one of condition alone. Other writers of this class, both European and American, furnish frequent examples of this mischievous tendency.

to which the soul by some divine decision is consigned. They are interpreted as pointing to condition and environment, to doom or reward, rather than, as our Lord primarily employed them, to lost or saved character.

In the incomplete adjustments of this world, the fundamental proposition that under the divine constitution of things condition must turn upon the primary problem of character, is often overlooked or even denied. Our earthly life is made up so largely of externalities,—our surroundings, possessions, attainments are so extensively determined by inheritance, by multiplex social connections, and even by what we term accident, that it is often difficult amid the tangled web of temporal affairs to trace the action of this fundamental law. Yet the human reason, the human conscience, are constantly affirming the law, and one of the primal tasks recognized in all civilized forms of society is its practical enforcement. But in eternity these earthly complications will drop off as in a moment, and the soul will be compelled to see more clearly than this life could ever reveal the fact, that what it is, as seen in the light of the divine adjudication, should and will fix its place, determine every condition, and bring in happiness or misery at once and forever. In that life character is every thing the soul has, and there, if not here, character visibly determines sphere, environment, destiny.

Employing the term, character, in this connection as embodying the sum total of what each soul is in spiritual quality, in belief and disposition, in feeling and action, as tested by the divine standards of moral personality, it thus becomes obvious that the one essential thing which every soul carries with it into the conscious experience of the coming life is, must be, character. The question as to the precise application of this statement

to the very large proportion of the human race who die before what we term character, has been developed in consciousness, need not be discussed at this stage. Nor is it needful to consider just here how far the term is applicable to the myriads who live and die in a state of spiritual infancy, amid the moral obscurations of heathenism. It is important merely to note the generic fact that character, however inchoate, however undeveloped or disabled, is and is to be the one essential heritage of man as man in the intermediate state. The soul, in other words, takes nothing into eternity but itself, and that self will be, must be, the test of its condition forever and ever. Even the infant bringing into that state nothing but the germs of character, and the pagan who has passed through life under the moral disabilities imposed by outward condition, must commence their immortal existence under the same spiritual law. To one, to all, the one supreme thing in eternity must be character.

Setting aside therefore as secondary the problem of condition in the intermediate state, and fixing attention simply on the primary place and moment of character, we are led at once to note the further truth that growth in character is the primal and the main experience of the soul in that state. Such development of character from its earliest germs within the infant breast to its earthly maturity in the saint or the sinner, is indeed the supreme phenomenon in our existence even in this world,—a phenomenon often obscured by adventitious events, by externalities in experience or condition, yet none the less the one momentous thing in the biographic records of every soul. That this process is arrested at death,—that the soul continues through the long ranges of the intermediate life to be just what it was at

the instant of death, with no further development of its powers, no advance or maturing in the substance of its being, is altogether inconceivable. The fact of growth here, and of such growth as universal and as continuous in each person even down to the close of life, furnishes abundant ground for the belief that this type of growth will be exhibited, probably in forms far more distinct and impressive, after this life is over. The conception of the intermediate state as one of comparative quiescence, can not be carried to the extent of inferring that all development, all maturing, is arrested in that state,—that the soul lives on and on, without change, without advance, until the awakening trump of judgment. But to a disembodied soul only one form or direction of growth is possible—growth in character. To this interior result, whatever is external in place or condition must be altogether subordinate. The development of itself according to the dominant beliefs, feelings, dispositions, aspirations incorporated within it here, and carried with it into that new mode of being, is the only experience of which as a soul it is capable. Its environment may indeed affect at many points such growth in moral personality, yet that environment will not as a cause determine the interior development. Rather is it true that this spiritual unfolding proceeds by laws and forces deeper far than any imposed by surrounding conditions—by the forces and the laws inherent in the soul itself.

These brief hints respecting the relative prominence of character and condition in the disembodied state, and respecting the primary fact of development in character as constituting the main feature of human experience in that state, are here brought in simply as introductory to the more fundamental question, whether changes in char-

acter are possible in this future life. The abstract query whether this species of contingency belongs to the nature of all finite beings in whatever world, need not be argued here. The possibility of change for the worse even among angels can not be denied in view of the fact that, so far as we know, sin originated in the angelic world, and from that world came into ours—whether it had existed there as an awful reality long ages before the creation of man, or appeared in the moral universe for the first time in immediate conjunction with the temptation and the fall. Further, the perseverance of saints is not supposed to rest on any intrinsic impossibility of their falling away into sin, but rather on the purpose and promise of the Father, on the mediation of the Son, and on the attendant, preservative ministrations of the Spirit, not only here but hereafter. And if such as have once been sanctified have still within themselves a law of mutability which, apart from the pledged grace and power of God, might suffer them to lapse into evil, it may be still more strongly affirmed that such a law of mutability stretches its dark shadows in eternity as here across the path of all those who have never been savingly affected by the Holy Ghost.

But the possibility of passing from a state of sin, or even of moral weakness or inaptitude such as the infant or the pagan may exhibit, into a state of holiness allied to that of angels or of Deity, is certainly involved in far greater difficulties than those which stand in the way of a fall from holiness into sin. Anomalous as the development of the principle of evil in a soul created holy must ever be, the anomaly of an antithetic change to moral completeness in one already a sinner, whether by choice or by native taint and bias, must be far greater. For, in the first case, we see simply the upspringing of

the new, bad law of self, in antagonism to the divine law of obedience; in the latter we must either conceive of the soul, degenerate and weak through sin, restoring itself to a frame and state of holiness, or of some mighty power from above the soul working out within the spiritual life a moral transformation which self could never have produced. Radical changes from sin to holiness are for this reason far more difficult even in this world than the opposite; as a matter of fact we know on the clear warrant of Scripture that they occur only where such divine energies are seen descending into the corrupted moral nature, and by their own supreme potency transforming it into the likeness of God. Whether even these superhuman forces can and do produce such a result, under the special conditions of existence in the intermediate state, can not be affirmed on any abstract or speculative ground. A sound and wise philosophy must rather recognize at the outset the vast spiritual difficulties which beset at many points the hope of such a moral transformation.

Without discussing this abstract question, we may here simply note the fact that there are four affirmative theories which maintain on various grounds the possibility of such changes from a state of sinfulness into a state of full perfection during the intermediate life. They are as follows:

The spontaneous or evolutionary theory, affirming that these salvatory changes will occur chiefly through the action of forces inherent in the soul itself;

The educational and disciplinary theory, which attributes the result rather to combined processes of training and chastisement providentially brought to bear upon the soul for its moral restoration;

The papal or purgatorial theory, which relates to im-

perfect believers only, and refers their ultimate perfection to the influences of direct punishment divinely inflicted upon them in order to their complete purgation and preparation for heaven ;

The probationary theory, asserting the salvation of a large proportion of the inhabitants of the intermediate state, not through such discipline or purgation, but through the presentation and application to them of the Gospel, as it is in Christ.

Of these theories the first three will be very briefly described and set aside ; a more minute and thorough examination of the fourth will, as has already been intimated, be the aim of the present treatise.

The essence of the evolutionary theory is that such changes in character from evil to good, with consequent

**V. The Evolutionary Theory: Salvation in Character Wrought by the Soul itself.**

change in condition and environment, may be expected to occur through the action of forces native to the soul itself—forces whose influence is alleged to be felt producing great moral transformations even in this world, and whose power may become vastly increased and be made a thousand-fold more fruitful, it is supposed, in the intermediate state.—Any one who believes that every soul of man, as a direct product of divine power and wisdom and love, is created as holy as our first parents were,—who holds that every such creature has within himself all the abilities and resources requisite to perfect action,—who regards sin as a mere stumbling and falling incident to the imperfect training or narrow experience of time,—who thus confuses reformation with regeneration and virtue with religion in this life, may readily accept this rationalizing theory as to moral transformations which men may pro-

duce in themselves during the future life. It is not surprising that disciples of Channing and especially of Theodore Parker in America, and others of like doctrinal tendency in England and Germany, should be inclined to some such explanation. What they hold as to the spiritual capabilities of the soul, even when shrouded in the gloom of paganism, leads to no other conclusion: and their definition of the term, salvation, as implying spiritual change for the better wrought out mainly by the innate energies of the soul apart from the Spirit of God, makes the conclusion more plausible. Starting from such a theological basis, it is not strange that they contemplate not merely the infant, the heathen man, the uneducated thoughtless sinner in Gospel lands, but even the most obdurate and wicked of men the world over, as thus capable of correcting for themselves in their intermediate condition the mistakes of this earthly life, and by the restorative capabilities inherent in human nature, of lifting themselves up progressively into the higher atmosphere of truth, of duty, of unselfish and holy love.

Nor is it an insignificant fact that some among the high authorities quoted in support of the dogma of *post mortem* probation, are inclined to regard this naturalistic view with some degree of favor. Thus Martensen, while in form arguing against the notion of a perfectibility to be attained through the natural progress of the soul from degree to degree of moral development, without gracious interposition, still lays peculiar stress on the influence of the intermediate state itself, as tending to lead the soul to virtue and holiness. He describes the departed (*Dogmatics*, § 276-7) as in a condition of meditative rest, a state of thoughtful passivity; and the kingdom they inhabit, as not one of works or deeds,



since they no longer possess the conditions or capabilities upon which works and deeds are possible. It is rather, he adds, a kingdom of subjectivity, a kingdom of calm thought and self-fathoming, a kingdom of remembrance, in which the soul enters into its own inmost recesses, and falls back upon that which is the very foundation of soul life: a state in which, as he pictures it, the voices of earth grow dumb, the voices of eternity are heard, the spirit is aroused to see itself, the soul works out a new consciousness, and so the realm of the dead becomes to it necessarily a realm of reflection, correction, judgment. There is in souls as such, he adds, an inextinguishable capability of good, and therefore they may continue to mould and govern themselves according to the new manifestations of the divine will while in this condition, even until the last, the final judgment. And it is on this interior process quite as much as on the descent of Christ into Hades and the proclamation of the Gospel there, that Martensen seems to rely as the basis for his doctrine of ultimate salvation.

Can we rest on any such process as this, as constituting a sufficient ground of hope respecting the ultimate restoration of all men, or even of any large proportion of those who die in sin, to a final condition of holiness and acceptance with God? Will all infants, borne in moral unconsciousness into that realm of the dead, there begin to develop and expand by native capability, as a plant by interior force bursts forth into its appointed flower, and so become by innate energy all that God desires his creatures to be? Will all the heathen there shake off the spiritual disabilities which have come upon them in this life, and by virtue of their own spiritual powers develop themselves in that peculiar sphere into complete, perfect manhood? Will those who have neg-

lected to use what they have known of Christ and His salvation in this world, and those who have been reprobate here as to all holy things, there of themselves correct all such wrong tendencies, set up a new law and a new spirit within their own breasts, and from some point in that mysterious condition turn their eyes and their hearts decisively toward God and holiness? In a word, may we anticipate that salvation will come to all mankind, or indeed to any soul of man hereafter, in virtue of such interior processes of rectification and improvement as are here contemplated?

Waiving altogether the obvious fact that the Word of God lays no foundation for such a belief—that it nowhere justifies the hope that either in this world or in any other a bad character will change itself by any energy innate in the soul into a good character, we are bound to say on rational grounds alone that all such anticipations are vain. This might be argued from what we actually see of moral development in this world, since under these earthly conditions we nowhere find children growing spontaneously into spiritual perfection: we nowhere see pagan races becoming virtuous and pure by any innate energy: we nowhere see the sinful and the reprobate revolutionizing their own moral experience, cleansing themselves from each taint of evil, and setting up of their own accord a loving affiliation with angels and with God. Neither have we any warrant that the intermediate state will become a school of training in character so much better than this life, that what does not take place here may be expected to occur in the case of all, or of many, there. If we affirm nothing of infants or others who have not entered consciously on moral experience in this world, we know enough at least of the tendencies of the heathen mind,

enough of the power of evil in the case of adult transgressors in Christian lands, to justify rather the anticipation that what is dominant in the soul here will remain in baleful supremacy hereafter. We know enough to lead directly to the expectation that evil will still abide as the ruling power in those in whom it is the ruling power now, and even that it will develop in a future state, as it does in this world, into greater force and authoritativeness, age after age. If sin were merely a physical product, the bad outgrowth of defective or diseased bodily organism, we might possibly look for such moral improvement when the dropping off of this corrupting element should leave the soul free to work out without hindrance its own supreme and better desires. But sin is of the soul rather than of the body: the first glimpses of it in the moral universe are those which fallen angels furnish: and the highest and the worst forms of it in man are such as originate, not in the animal organism, but in the selfish and rebellious spirit,—forms therefore which death has no power to extirpate, and which may the rather live on in more active and violent measure when the physical restraints of time are finally removed.

But this natural tendency of sin to become permanent hereafter as in this world is not the only argument against this rationalistic hope. That hope loses sight of another pregnant fact, that by an intrinsic and inevitable law of being, judgment must begin at death. Isaac Taylor<sup>1</sup> has given us a remarkable and an awful picture of the scenes and experiences that must, in the nature of things, be immediately consequent upon the closing

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<sup>1</sup> *Saturday Evening*, Essay xxiii, on the Dissolution of Human Nature.

up of mortal life in the case of every adult. He graphically describes the manner in which those varieties of experience which originate directly in the union of soul and body, such as the imagination with its special phases of emotion, must fall away and disappear forever when that union is dissolved. All forms of bodily excitement cease: the decay of the animal life carries with it the decline of all that is related to that life. The soul is thrown back at once upon the play of its moral affections, whether these are pure or depraved: the moral quality of its experience alone remains: the mixture of good and evil, so marked in our earthly life, disappears, and each person rests henceforth on his own proper center. And the good and the wicked are thus separated by an interior process antecedent to all formal judgment: each soul becomes intuitively its own judge, and from the nature of things there begins, not another stage of development or another form of probation, but rather a state of retribution inward, instant, inevitable. To die—as Taylor solemnly says—is to come denuded of all but conscience, into the open presence of the Holy One: and in that presence, so unlike the state of quiescent absorption in self which Martensen describes, there is no opportunity for development from evil-doing to holiness through some native action of the disembodied soul,—there is room for nothing but retribution inward, instant, inevitable. Thus not only the natural tendency of sin to ripen into fixed maturity, but also the nature of the transition which death introduces and the experiences known to be directly consequent upon death, render valueless this naturalistic hope. If men do not transplant themselves from a state of sin to a state of holiness in this life, vain, doubly vain, is it to dream that they will of themselves effect a change so

vital after this season of opportunity and of grace is over.

Closely related to this theory of moral restoration through the inherent energies of the soul itself, is the

**VI. The Disciplinary Theory: Salvation through Training; Restorationism.**

theory that such restoration may be effected through special processes of training and discipline divinely introduced in the intermediate state, and prolonged sufficiently to secure in every case the salvation desired.—This view introduces, in addition, a supposititious series of instrumentalities, some of them educational simply, others stimulating or encouraging, still others punitive in quality,—all designed to conspire together with the native aspirations of the soul, in the production of holiness in those who never were holy in this life. A new environment is said to be thrown around them; another set of motives, unknown to sense and time, will come into operation; the methods of teaching and of moral influence will be, perhaps unspeakably, enhanced. Chastisement, and even penalty, may be divinely utilized to the same end. Pain and suffering are in their nature educational in this world, and they will retain the same quality hereafter; as they seek always to induce reformation here, they will be utilized for this purpose and for this purpose only in the intermediate life. And as a result, myriads of souls, if not every human soul, will at last be saved—saved not through the Gospel, but through these educational and disciplinary processes introduced and made effectual after death.

Traces of this theory appear at various points in the history of religious thought. Pusey<sup>1</sup> gives us a consid-

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<sup>1</sup> *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment*, pp. 112-5; also, Appendix.

erable list of the Christian Fathers who applied the doctrine of Paul (1 Cor. 3:12-15) not merely to imperfect believers, but to other sinful persons who through such disciplinary processes might be brought at length into a state of purity and of spiritual perfection. In Origen we find the dogma developing into the broad affirmation of the ultimate restitution of all things (Acts 3:21), including not merely discipline or punishment, but also spiritual training and a final restoration of all mankind to holiness. In Germany the school of Schliermacher and others have advocated the dogma of universal restitution partly, though not exclusively, on this ground. Some American representatives of current universalism have advanced a similar belief,—resting their expectation of the ultimate salvation of all men, not so much on the proclamation of the Gospel to the dead, as on the effect of these educational and disciplinary instrumentalities—new conditions, new motives, new relationships, new revelations, possibly,—bringing about a spiritual result which the Gospel had never been able in time to accomplish.

The objections justly urged against this conception of spiritual restoration need not be specifically presented here. It is enough to note the decisive fact that we have in the Word of God no hint of such a process as is here presupposed; the Bible nowhere suggesting the thought that training or discipline, however administered, can bring about in the soul of man a spiritual change which divine love revealed on the cross, and divine grace exhibited in the operations of the Holy Ghost, have been powerless to accomplish. We may well note also that, so far as such disciplinary methods are brought into use in this world, even in conjunction with the scheme of grace, they are often found to be

ineffectual, and sometimes to harden rather than subdue the heart; and we therefore see no good reason for anticipating that such methods, working by themselves, would in the intermediate state secure any better results. It may be noted further, that a salvation so secured would be something very different from the salvation offered to men in Christ, and that the practical result of such a process in addition to that introduced by the Gospel, would be two great classes of saved persons, at many points widely unlike in experience and character, and consequently in destiny. And beyond all this, it must be regarded as conclusive against this view that it involves so many serious misconceptions as to the constitution of the human spirit and the proper mode of influencing it to good, to the nature and claims of law and righteousness, to the necessary attitude of God toward transgression, and also to salvation itself viewed as a restoration to holiness through love and in love.

The papal dogma of Purgatory, though widely separated from the two preceding theories, may still be placed in this list of opinions since

**VII. The Purgatorial Theory: Salvation through Punishment.**

it contemplates extensive changes in character from good to better, in degree indeed rather than in kind, to be produced within the intermediate state by processes which are purgatorial or purificatory rather than evolutionary or educational.—This dogma provides for no change whatever in the condition of the pagan nations, or indeed of any adults who die outside of the church, and without her sanctifying baptism. For all baptized infants the Church of Rome affirms complete deliverance from original sin even during this life, and conse-

quently if any die in infancy, an immediate admission into heaven. For infants dying without the purifying influence of baptism, her theologians (BELLARMINE, *De Purgatorio*), have asserted the existence of a separate abode, the *Limbus Infantum*, where such children abide in a state of privation rather than of punishment—the *levissima damnatio*, from which they may at some future period be transplanted to the heavenly life. For those who lived before the advent, the saints and patriarchs of the pre-Christian dispensation, the *Limbus Patrum* was provided, wherein they were kept in a state of expectancy until they were released at the advent of Christ. The remainder of mankind, not believers, whether within the domain of Christendom or dwelling in the darkness of heathenism, the Catholic Church consigned directly to hell, though maintaining various degrees of punishment in proportion to the earthly light enjoyed, and also allowing wide variations in opinion as to the nature of the torments inflicted in this retributive abode. But for all adults baptized, and living within the domain of the Church, and who at death are not complete in holiness, the Church affirmed the existence of Purgatory—a state of discipline and purification wherein the dross of remaining imperfections is burned away, and the soul is prepared spiritually for the beatific vision of God. It contemplated, in other words, what is not a spiritual renovation, but rather a development of the good already attained, and a correspondent repression and diminution of the evil in the soul, such as will qualify it at length for an entrance on its permanent heavenly condition.

Concerning this theory of spiritual changes wrought in the coming life through divine purgation, little needs to be said in this connection. The dogma rests on the



scantiest foundation in the Scriptures; from those recognized as canonical by Protestantism only a few allusions to the purgatorial as well as punitive qualities of fire (1 Cor. 3:13; also Mal. 3:2-3. Matt. 3:11. 1 Peter 1:7) can be gathered in its support. Other passages (Matt. 12:32), containing a possible implication of forgiveness in the future state, or (Matt. 5:26) suggesting the possibility of paying the uttermost farthing hereafter if not in this world, are also supposed to corroborate it. But its origin is traceable mainly to the false conception of heaven current in the ancient Church, and to the speculative difficulties involved in the instantaneous transplantation of the imperfect believer, still tainted with impurity and with sin, into the presence of God and the fellowship of angels and the holy martyrs. Some of the earliest Fathers, as Clement of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa, inclined to the opinion that future punishments are in their nature reformatory, and tend to lead all souls that suffer them to repentance. The universalism of Origen rested largely on this basis. But it was from Gregory the Great, that the Church received the dogma in its larger form, though even he limited the class of sins for whose removal such purgation was available, to such as the Church pronounces venial rather than mortal. Among the Scholastics the dogma received various degrees of support. It is to the Council of Trent, however, that we refer for its full and authoritative formulation; Sess. xxv: *Decretum de Purgatorio*. Protestantism has universally repudiated it as an error unwarranted by the Word of God, and in its practical application in connection with prayers and masses for the dead a dangerous delusion. The Smalcald Articles describe it as a *mera diaboli larva*; and the Thirty-Nine Articles, as a fond thing vainly invented

and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the Word of God.<sup>1</sup>

Setting aside these three types of opinion, we are brought at once to the only affirmative theory remaining,—that of a change in character from evil to good, with consequent change in condition, to be wrought through the proclamation of the Gospel and the conversion of souls in virtue of the grace of God in Christ Jesus.—It is implied in this theory that salvation through sufficient knowledge of Christ and through faith and acceptance of Him as a Savior, is possible to certain classes of persons, or perhaps to all souls during the intermediate state, substantially as such salvation is offered on the same terms to all men in the present life. It is held that what is thus made possible actually occurs,—that Christ is really made known to these classes in that state as a Savior through whom they may yet be delivered from the power and doom of sin: and that every such human spirit is actually brought to this alternative, and sooner or later does in fact reject Christ or accept Him, substantially as men reject or accept Him in this world. It is also held that no one is condemned to hell until this probation or moral testing has been carried on to its proper point of completion, and that only those are consigned to everlasting retribution who have resisted such offers of grace, and have thus committed

VIII. The Probationary Theory: Salvation through a Gospel after Death.

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<sup>1</sup>It is a significant fact that so many of the leading English advocates of the dogma of Probation after Death have put themselves on record in defense of the notion that the state of the dead can be improved or changed by the prayers of the living: PLUMPTRE, *Spirits in Prison*; essays on Prayers for the Dead and Purgatory. FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*; essay on Hist. of Eschatology. MAURICE, *Theological Essays*.

the sin unto death—the sin which places the soul beyond the range of spiritual recovery. Further, it is maintained that the limiting of such probation to the present life, as is taught in the current theology, and the doctrine that the estate of men is settled decisively at death, are unwarranted by Scripture or by reason and moral feeling: and that, though there be no ground for hope of spiritual restoration in man himself, or in any mere processes of training or discipline or purgation, we have sufficient reason to expect such restoration in innumerable multitudes of cases in this higher and better way.

In respect to the classes of persons who are thus to be saved in the intermediate state, considerable variety of opinion exists among those who in general are concurrent advocates of this theory. It is agreed by all among them, that this gracious opportunity will be given to all children who die before reaching adult years. Infants unbaptized, or the offspring of unbelieving parents, or born amid squalor and ignorance such as exist in the great cities of Christendom, or coming into life for a brief moment under the awful shadows of paganism, are all alike to be made thus acquainted with Christ hereafter, and after having come into full consciousness are to receive Him or reject Him, under a distinct sense of personal accountability, and with full knowledge of the doom which must ultimately follow all willful unbelief. And this proposition includes, not merely all such infants dying from day to day in the present age, but all who have thus died in infancy from the beginning of time, and all who will yet so die till the end of the world,—a number not only exceeding incalculably the hundreds of millions of persons now on the earth, but including at least one half of all that have ever

lived, or shall live on the earth down to the close of time.

The theory is also generally regarded as including all the adult heathen who have never had the opportunity of knowing Christ in this life as their Savior, and who have passed into eternity in their estate of comparative spiritual infancy, with no conscious chance of salvation through the grace of God. This is not the position of Zwingli as to the possible acceptance of eminent philosophers and sages such as Socrates or Seneca; nor that of some later teachers to the effect that the light of the Gospel may be shining abroad in the earth, and the regenerative influences of the Spirit be conferred on men far beyond the geographic range of Christendom, even to such an extent that many among the heathen may in this way be saved without distinctly knowing the historic Christ. It is an incomparably wider proposition. It embraces, not merely a few conspicuous minds, but the vast multitudes of the pagan world,—not merely the masses of the pagan world since the light of Christianity began to be spread abroad in the earth, but those of all the heathen tribes and races from the earliest dawn of time,—not these alone, but also all the countless hosts that shall yet live and die in heathenism, before this world shall be filled with the saving knowledge of Christ. To every such heathen mind, wherever and whenever born, Christ is yet to reveal himself, and to every such mind as truly as to those now hearing the sound of the Gospel, is the alternative of accepting or rejecting Him to be offered. Of the innumerable host thus in the intermediate state, considering now the great problem of the soul, and so deciding or about to decide by this process their eternal condition forever after the judgment, it is impossible

to speak. When counted up, together with that even greater host who die in infancy, the aggregate must far exceed many times over not only all the believers now dwelling on the earth, but all who have ever lived in it since the day of the incarnation. Even if we add to this multitude of the faithful all the patriarchs and saints who were saved through faith before the incarnation, the disparity between those who are redeemed on earth, and those who on this theory are now passing through their probation while in a disembodied state, is enormous past all calculation.

The theory is also regarded by most of its advocates as including all those in Gospel lands who by reason of ignorance and other like causes have never properly considered in this world the claims of Christ; not only the ignorant and blinded and misled of any one land or of the present age, but all those of this class in every Christian country, and through all the centuries since the first proclamation of grace through a Redeemer. And when we recall the condition of nominal Christendom during the slow and toilsome development of ancient Christianity, the religious stupor resting upon millions on millions during the dark ages, the moral state of the populations of Europe and Western Asia before the Reformation, the dreadful ignorance of the crowded masses of our great cities in Europe and America,—the vice, the filth, the crimes which have blinded, are blinding, the sight of innumerable millions in Christendom so that they can not or will not see Christ and be saved by Him,—when we call all this to mind, we may in some measure begin to appreciate the host of those of this general class also, for whom on this theory provision for salvation after death is supposed to be made.

How far this latter line of inclusion may be carried, the advocates of the dogma in question are not agreed among themselves. The English school, Maurice and Farrar, and even Plumptre, are disposed to include all but those who in this world by willful resistance to the Holy Ghost have committed the sin unto death. The German school, represented in Dorner and Nitsch and Müller, are inclined rather so to narrow the circle as to include none but those who, though living in Christian lands, might substantially be regarded as pagan. The American school are obviously intermediate, yet their general representations clearly imply a very broad range of possibility; some at least appear to present what may be described as the widest form of the claim. It may justly be added that, while all schools seem to lay large stress on the case of infants and of the heathen and the unevangelized masses in Christendom, their general presentation of the dogma compels the query whether they are not really more concerned with the problem of probation as related to those who have actually heard of Christ more or less fully, and have more or less distinctly rejected him in the present life. Evidences justifying this query are not difficult to find.

Still greater indeterminateness appears in respect to the important question of method. While the scheme of salvation in the future state is declared to be identical with that scheme as proclaimed on the earth,—while it is maintained that men can be saved in eternity as here only through Christ, and his mediation, the manner in which this result is to be secured is but indistinctly defined. It is indeed held that our Lord introduced this gospel dispensation in the under world during the few hours between his death and his resurrection. But how is this work continuously carried on? Does the incar-

nate Christ dwell in that world of spirits, manifesting Himself there again and again, as He did to his disciples after his resurrection, and so drawing the innumerable multitudes of the dead unto himself? Who are engaged in making the uncounted millions that have died since that resurrection, acquainted with these gracious provisions? Are the ministry, the sacraments, the living church, there brought into play as missionary forces, designed to diffuse more widely the knowledge of this broad salvation? Does the Holy Ghost, whose revealing and regenerative function is indispensable to the actual salvation of even one soul in this life, operate there as here,—taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the myriads of disembodied spirits there congregated? Or, will all these helpful agencies be needless, and these myriads be brought in uncounted numbers to Christ by some mysterious modes of disclosure, wholly beyond our present range of apprehension? In the absence of any revelation on these points, shall we conclude that no such phenomenon as an incarnation of Christ, or a continuous outpouring of the Holy Ghost, or any active service on the part of the Church, with her sacraments and ministries, is needful to the conversion of sinners in that world; and consequently that redemption is a very different, and possibly much easier process there than here, where all these instrumentalities are found to be necessary to the conversion of even a single sinner? Or, shall we believe that the Savior of sinners has inaugurated in that world a system of means and instrumentalities as much more effective than those employed by Him in this life, as the multitudes to be reached are greater, and the task of redemption is more difficult? It certainly can not be viewed as improper to press such inquiries as to

method, in the contemplation of a scheme so vast in its scope and so immeasurable in its consequences.

A kindred inquiry forces itself upon us with respect to the practical outcome of this immense remedial process. Here again wide variety is apparent. The English school are inclined to affirm the largest hope at this point; maintaining, with Tennyson, that God will make the pile complete at last, and that not one soul shall be cast as rubbish into the great void of retribution. As some of the Fathers held that Satan himself would be brought back ultimately to allegiance and duty, so they seem to anticipate little less than the dawning of a perfect day when there shall be neither sin nor hell in the universe. The German school have rather held that there will be a hell forever, at least for those who have committed the sin unto death. Müller (*Christ. Doct. of Sin*, Vol. II;) rejects what he styles the exceptionless universality of the ultimate restitution: and affirms that those who obstinately give themselves up to moral evil, must finally lose all ability or capacity to be restored to a state of grace, and must consequently become an eternal petrification in sin. The American school vary widely in their anticipations as to the outcome of the proffers of grace,—some suggesting, guardedly, that the Gospel is offered to all, and its rejection is made the ground of condemnation, be those who reject few or many,—others apparently falling in with the advanced teaching of Farrar, and with him cherishing a hope as large almost as the entire population of the universe of the dead. By some writers of each school the process of grace in that life is viewed as simple and easy; by others it is supposed to be accompanied with greater difficulties than attend the salvation of the soul in time. The first class consequently



contemplate the final restoration as well nigh universal; the second regard it as but partial and elective, and possibly quite limited in result.

It is to an examination of this theory of Salvation in the Intermediate State, wrought out through the instrumentality of the Gospel of Christ made

**IX. The Question to be considered: its Nature and Importance.**

known in some way throughout the vast realms of the dead, that this treatise is devoted.—It is proposed to submit this theory first and chiefly to the tests of Scripture, since no light but that which shines upon it from the Word of God can adequately reveal either its truth or its falsity. This Word alone can assure us beyond peradventure that there is a life beyond the grave, or that this life is endless, or that its quality and experiences are dependent on the character and course of men in the present life. So this Word alone can tell us what the Gospel is as a remedial scheme, or what are the conditions and influences requisite to its saving application, or what effects may follow its application, either in this world or in the world to come. What this Word teaches, therefore, and that alone, can be the proper material and ground of faith: no light derived from intuitive or speculative processes, from general reasonings of any sort, outside of or beyond what the Bible affirms, can on such a theme furnish adequate basis for either the hopes or the fears of men.

If it be said that the response of Scripture to our anxious inquiries is often vague and insufficient, it still remains true that we have no other. Neither nature nor reason furnishes any reply, that is clearer or more convincing. All the revealing radiance we have, comes finally from the Word:—not from the silences of Script-

ure, suggestive though these often are, nor from casual glimpses or partial studies or crude generalizations on the supposed contents of Scripture, but simply and strictly from what the Bible itself directly affirms or by clear implication makes manifest. Nor is it difficult to find reasons why the declarations of this Book regarding the future life should be relatively brief and sparse. For the prime design of the Bible is to bring the truth and the authority of God to bear immediately upon the life that now is,—to proclaim a present Gospel worthy to be believed at once by all who hear it, and to be scattered abroad among the present tribes and races of men, in all the world. Its references to the past are therefore mainly such as should the more vigorously enforce the obligations of the living present, and its references to the future have the same design. On such a theme this holy Word has no message to human curiosity merely, no response to critical or intellectual speculation, no revelations of coming events but those which are calculated to arouse and encourage the soul of man to a career of faith and obedience in the life that now is.

It will be in harmony with this primary law of allegiance to the Word of God, if we turn further for corroborating light to the historic faith of the Christian Church. What are the teachings of Christian symbolism on this grave question? What has the Church during the ages past believed, and what has it refused to believe, on the point here involved? What is the joint testimony of the ancient symbols and the modern confessions,—what do we find the concurrent voice and language of Holy Faith to be, as we thoughtfully study its sublime historic declarations? The inquiry is the more important since so much has been claimed,

both from what the creeds of Christendom have contained, and from what they have not contained, respecting a salvation after death. And if it should be found, on careful examination, that this claim is unwarranted—if it should be found rather that Christian Symbolism by direct teaching, by both implication and exclusion, by the assertion of doctrine radically at variance with this dogma, has effectually condemned it, that discovery may well confirm us in the conclusion that the dogma is false.

In like manner, the teachings of Christian Theology and also the lessons of Spiritual Experience may properly be summoned into service in this discussion.—If, for example, this dogma shall be found to be the germ of a new theology—if it contains principles of interpretation, philosophic hypotheses, rationalistic incentives and tendencies, which at numerous points are subversive of the received theology of evangelical Christendom, this fact may well be noted: since it is at least a fair presumption that a new opinion which, if admitted, would largely revolutionize the best teaching of the best thought in the Church hitherto, or would require an extensive reconstruction of Christian doctrine in its interest, is not the very truth of God.—The testimony of Christianized Experience is specially important here, since such ardent and profuse appeals are made to such experience in support of the dogma. Is it not alleged that the voice of Christian feeling in its favor is distinct, strong, irresistible:—that religious trust in the justice of God and the mercy of God demands this dogma as its only satisfying hypothesis? Is it not alleged that the ordinary doctrine is revolting to Christian sensibility—that the perplexity and darkness in which it envelops the soul, are destructive to healthful spiritual

life—that joy and peace in Christ are even impossible, and our blessed religion is made on this basis a fiction or an awful catastrophe? On the other hand may not more careful analysis show that these are comparatively shallow and casual varieties of Christian feeling: and that a more profound apprehension of the biblical truth may lead the soul rather to rest humbly yet confidently in the belief that God is just and good, though there be a hell in which He punishes sinners, and punishes them forever? Nay more: is it not possible that profounder insight into the divine purposes and administration, deeper and purer sympathy with Christ and His redemptive scheme, and larger increments of grace, may change the entire aspect of the problem, and may teach the sanctified soul to sing on earth the song of the redeemed in glory: Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments?

That such an inquiry as is here proposed, is important, will hardly be doubted by any one who has noted the wide interest recently exhibited in all eschatological questions, and especially in those which relate to our own eternal future; or who has observed how prevalent error on these questions is becoming, and how many are already drawn astray by false or defective beliefs. There is indeed for obvious reasons no department of Christian doctrine, in which the mind is more likely to fall into error, or in which erroneous opinion is more seductive or more injurious. In view of such facts, does it not seem idle or illusive to speak of the dogma of Probation after Death as a mere speculation, a scholarly fancy, something permissible in the school, but of little moment in practice? To every such suggestion, do not the strong affirmations, the peculiar zeal, the passionate ardor exhibited in its advocacy, furnish de-

cisive reply? As a mere theory, an exegetical or theological hypothesis or inference entertained by a few minds here or there, the dogma might perchance be allowed, not indeed a titled position among the necessary articles of faith, but some quiet place within the wide circle of theoretic beliefs permissible among evangelical minds. But the questions involved are by no means speculative only, neither is the interest excited by them likely to be either local or transient. Whatever may be true in Germany, there can be no question that the influence of this dogma in both England and America is already extensive and deleterious,—not merely within the realm of religious thought and experience, but also in the broader spheres of practical activity in the interest of the Gospel. A new theology seems already to be growing into form on the foundation which it furnishes: the reconstruction of the current theology at many fundamental points is already predicted as certain to follow its acceptance. Its influence upon the great work of the Church in behalf of souls, and especially upon the work of missions in pagan lands, is even now matter of serious and painful concern in many quarters. Nor is he a mere alarmist who, in view of such indications and such possibilities, earnestly solicits the attention of Christian minds everywhere to the question whether this dogma is in fact entitled to any place among the *credenda* of our Holy Faith, or shall rather be cast aside as an unscriptural and a mischievous error.

## CHAPTER II.

### *TESTIMONY OF PARTICULAR SCRIPTURES.*

ACCEPTING as fundamental the proposition that the question thus brought under discussion must be answered primarily, not by rational speculations or the impulses of feeling, or even by theologic affirmations or ecclesiastical verdicts, but from the testimonies of the Word of God, we may turn at once to that Word for instruction. Amid whatever perplexities the solemn problem respecting the state and experiences of the dead prior to the general judgment may involve, the only clear or comforting light must be that which shines upon us from this divine source. Taking up the biblical references called into service by those who advocate the dogma of future probation, we observe that they may be grouped roughly into two classes—those which are supposed to present or suggest this dogma in some particular aspect, and those which are supposed to justify it on more generic grounds as a truth which, though it may not be distinctly sustained by specific quotations, may still be accepted as in harmony with the general substance and spirit of Christianity. Following this classification, we may here study the problem in the light of particular Scriptures—expecting in a succeeding chapter to pursue the biblical inquiry still further along such more sweeping or generic lines.

The particular Scriptures thus claiming primary attention may be grouped with sufficient accuracy under the seven following titles :

Passages setting forth the fullness and freeness of the Gospel salvation,—suggesting, as is supposed, the inference that this full and free salvation may be extended in its range beyond the present world ;

Passages exhibiting in comprehensive form the readiness of God to forgive sin,—suggesting in like manner the inference that such forgiveness may be granted to men in the intermediate state, as well as in time ;

Passages intimating the gracious limitation and the possible termination of punishment for sin, if not in the present life, then in the life to come ;

Passages indicating that judgment upon personal character will not take place until the end of the world,—with the consequent implication that at any time hereafter, prior to such judgment, men may be saved through faith in Christ ;

Passages implying or directly revealing the fact of such probation after death, consequent upon a general proclamation of the Gospel to the dead ;

Passages further justifying by biblical example and illustration the doctrine of a second probation, to be granted to mankind during the intermediate state ;

Passages setting forth unbelief, or the rejection of Christ, as the only ground of human condemnation,—with the implication that no one can be condemned until either here or hereafter he has thus personally rejected Christ as his Redeemer.<sup>1</sup>

It will be noticed that the first three or four of these groups of texts can furnish none but inferential testimony or suggestion, and that the direct witness in the case must be found, mainly if not wholly, under the

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<sup>1</sup>For an unclassified list of such texts, see FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*, pp. 219-225. Also, NEWMAN SMYTH, *Orthodox Theology* ; Appendix, 179-185.

remaining varieties of particular biblical evidence adduced. Following the natural order, we may profitably examine first these indirect and inferential proofs, and afterward those which are urged as more directly evidential.

The first special group of texts thus brought into requisition is that which sets forth the fullness and freeness of the salvation offered to mankind in the Gospel.—The Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost. He is the one Mediator between God and men, giving Himself a ransom for all. He is the divine propitiation both for our sins, and for the sins of the whole race. It is the will of God that through Christ all men should come into saving knowledge of the truth. God so loved the world that He gave his Son, in order that the world through Him might be saved. The promise of salvation in Him is given not merely to us or to our children, but equally to all them that are afar off—and even unto the ends of the earth. In the spirit of this promise the Church is commanded to go into all the earth and preach these glad tidings to every creature; the poor and maimed, the halt and blind, and those who are farthest away from light and grace, are to be invited to the divine feast of mercy.<sup>1</sup> Such are some of the free and large declarations made to men in connection with the Gospel; their truthfulness and tenderness, their inestimable preciousness, it is given to no mortal mind to comprehend. Rightly apprehended and used, they shed a certain divine glow over the entire scheme of grace, and

**I. Passages describing the Fullness and Freeness of Salvation.**

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 19: 10. 1 Tim. 2: 4-6. 1 John 2: 2. John 3: 16-7. Acts 2: 39. Matt. 16: 15. Luke 14: 21.



make that scheme forever attractive to the eye and the heart of man. But like every other divine assurance they may be misapprehended and injuriously diverted from their inspired purpose ; men may even make them a savor of death unto death.

Can it be justly inferred from these divine declarations, that this abundant salvation is not limited in its scope to the present life, but may reach and bless beyond the grave those who have never adequately heard the tidings of redemption through Christ while on the earth? The value of such an inference depends entirely on the question whether this gracious offer is not distinctly limited by Him who makes it to the present life. On this question there can be but one judgment among careful readers of the Scriptures. Nowhere in these passages of Holy Writ is it intimated or implied that this plan of salvation is to be in force eternally ; nowhere do those who read the invitation, gather the impression that the provisions of the plan of grace extend beyond the boundaries of earth and time. Our spontaneous conviction rather is that these provisions are to be accepted in this life ; the thought of the intermediate state as one in which, if not here, the sinner may accept Christ and be saved by Him, is in no instance suggested to the mind in connection with these offers. It is the world of mankind, and that world as it was in the age of the incarnation, and still is, that God so loved, and still loves, as to give His Son for its redemption. It was the world, and the world of men as we know it, that the Church was and is commissioned in the name of Christ to seek and to save. The lost whom He himself sought and redeemed were not lost spirits, but lost men.

It is certainly a very remarkable affirmation of Dor-

ner (*Theol.*, § 153: iii) to the effect that Christian grace is designed for human beings, not for inhabitants of earth simply. For such an affirmation there seems no biblical warrant whatever. The message of the Gospel is a message for the inhabitants of earth, and none other: were it not for the possible implication of one or two references, no one reading or hearing that message could ever gather any other intimation. To quote as Dorner does, such texts as Luke 19: 10, 1 John 2: 2, or even 1 Tim. 2: 4-6, to prove the broader view, seems like trifling with the divine testimony: in the latter text, they clearly are men, and men as now living on earth, and not souls in some disembodied condition, whom God desires to see, coming to the saving knowledge of the truth.

That the plan of salvation is thus limited to earth and time, is apparent not merely from the form of the offer itself, but also from the solemn injunctions accompanying it, and from the warnings everywhere associated with its rejection. The Savior stands at the door of the human heart, and knocks for instant admission. As on the last great day of the Hebrew feast, He still cries with earnest imperativeness, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. To all who are laboring and heavy laden under the present weight of sin, He offers not a possible salvation in some disembodied state of being, but an immediate rest—rest while they are still within the confines of time. All men are warned against the perils of delay, against the sin of trifling with this divine offer, against all apologies, excuses, rejection, as if the great question of the soul was ever an imminent question, and the future even in this world could not properly be counted on as a day of hope. In a word, the accepted time recognized in this gracious

scheme is the present life: the day of salvation is now: and all postponement of the opportunity thus offered is unwarranted by any line or letter of the divine Word.<sup>1</sup> And from such language, there can be no other legitimate inference than that this plan of salvation was intended to apply to men, and to men during their earthly state of being.

The same conclusion is reached by a contemplation of the conditions on which this salvation is conferred. These conditions are repentance, faith, submission,—in a word, sincere, cordial, instant acceptance. But when are men to comply with these conditions? In all the long series of biblical injunctions to repentance, can one be named which even suggests by remote implication that such repentance as God demands now, will still be acceptable to Him, if exercised beyond the limits of the present life? The spiritual attitude of Dives in the parable of Lazarus, as our Lord depicts it, is not the attitude of evangelical repentance: it is rather the attitude of a soul which has consciously entered on the awful experience of retribution. Nor in the numerous injunctions and exhortations to faith, in the form either of belief or of trust, can we find any indications that such faith is or can be savingly exercised beyond the grave. They who have crossed that boundary may believe and tremble as devils are described as doing, but no intimation is given that they will thereafter receive Christ, submit to Him, and be saved through Him. In a word, the Bible nowhere intimates that the faithful saying, proclaimed by Paul as worthy of all acceptance, is a saying that can be heard, believed in, accepted anywhere save in this life.

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. 3: 20. John 7: 37. Matt. 11: 28. Luke 19: 41-2. John 5: 40. Prov. 1: 20-23. 2 Cor. 6: 2.

Surely then we are not at liberty on any reasonable ground to infer from the fullness and freeness of the Gospel propositions, that they are as unlimited in duration and range, as this hypothesis presumes. By its own nature, such a remedial scheme as is presented to men in Christ, must have some limitations: the offer could not run on boundlessly. And when one simply reads the offer as he finds it in the Scriptures, apart from all theory or bias, he at once recognizes the limitations as distinctly as the offer: he sees the boundaries divinely imposed, and without hesitation he describes them as the boundaries of earth and time.

A second group of inferential passages is that which sets forth the readiness with which God is said in Scripture to forgive sin,—passages which are supposed to justify the deduction that sin may be forgiven not only during this life, but after death.—Declarations touching the divine willingness to forgive abound in the Bible: they glorify the Book on almost every page. In the Old Testament God is revealed, even in the Pentateuch, as the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth: keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. The psalmist in like manner describes Him as merciful and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy: not dealing with us after our sins, or rewarding us according to our iniquities. Isaiah declares that the Lord will have mercy upon the wicked man who forsakes his way, and will abundantly pardon the penitent soul. And throughout the New Testament the doctrine of divine compassion and readiness to forgive is even more fully declared, alike by evangelist and apostle,

**II. Passages exhibiting the Divine Forgiveness.**

and most of all in parable, in direct declaration, in imagery and act, by our Lord Himself.<sup>1</sup> God is love, and His love is infinite: and hence it is inferred that this love may extend beyond the present life, and may provide avenues and methods of exhibiting forgiveness to myriads, if not after the judgment, still within the intermediate state.

These passages are introduced in this connection chiefly to emphasize the particular text (Matt. 12: 31-2) which declares that all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, except the culminating sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost. Whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. The peculiar and intense form of negation in these closing words is regarded as a clear implication that all other sins may be forgiven in the other life.<sup>2</sup> In studying this passage, it is imperative to consider at the outset the general teaching of the Bible on the theme of divine forgiveness; and carefully to inquire respecting the consensus of meaning elsewhere, in order to the proper attainment of the meaning here.

The general fact clearly is that the divine mercy is just as truly conditioned as it is free in its manifestations; that while the Bible with so much affluence of

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 34: 6-7. Ps. 103: 8-10. Isa. 55: 7. Luke 6: 35-6. Rom. 5: 8. Also Luke 7: 41-50. Matt. 18: 21-35. John 3: 16. 1 John 4: 9.

<sup>2</sup> DORNER, *Theol.*, Vol. IV, § 153. VAN OOSTERZEE, *Theol.*, II, Sec. 149. FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*, Sermon IV. Farrar affirms that every sin except one can be forgiven in another life as truly as here, and that no human being has ever been able to decide what that sin is. He also holds that even the word, never, (Mark. 3: 29) does not necessarily imply endlessness: and that there may be in some remote æon forgiveness even for this sin.

language and imagery sets forth the love and grace of God in pardoning sinners, it invariably represents this love and grace as meted out to men in exact harmony with the dictates of wisdom and justice, and on terms and conditions with which God requires from those who receive forgiveness at His hands, the strictest compliance. The notion of a love which flows out from the divine nature spontaneously, and which lavishes itself upon men indiscriminately and without close regard to character or desert, is one which the Scripture nowhere justifies. God is as wise and just in the distribution of pardon as in the assignment of penalty; and unless we hold the conception of forgiveness in this moral and guarded aspect, we altogether fail to comprehend either the divine sentiment itself or its manifestations in the Gospel.—Bearing this general truth in mind, we are able at once, not only to see on what terms pardon is granted to men in this life, but also to discover that no single promise in either the Old or the New Testament, unless it be the one in question, can be reasonably interpreted as extending beyond the present life. The divine forgiveness is indeed free, but it is to be accepted by us when offered; and if we refuse the gracious offer, and repeat that refusal until death, the Bible leaves us to the solemn implication that the offer will be then and there withdrawn forever. The teaching of the Scripture in every other instance is, that forgiveness is an experience of earth and time, and that it is conditioned upon the manifestation by men on earth and in time of those states of heart, of that type of character, which alone can render pardon either justifiable or useful.

The suggestion that the antithesis presented by our Lord is an antithesis, not between worlds, but between

dispensations—the Gospel age on one side and some future age on the other (FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*, p. 112) seems to be sufficiently ruled out by the term, never, in the corresponding passage in Mark, and by the structure of the entire passage as found in the three evangelists. Clearly the antithesis relates to the present life on one side, and to life beyond the grave on the other. Are we then warranted, on the basis of the mere form of the sentence as uttered by our Lord, and without any suggestion from any other portion of the Scriptures, in assuming the possibility of forgiveness hereafter for every other sin committed by men—for all among the numerous, awful, damning varieties of transgression exhibited by all the multitudes of mankind? If as has been claimed, the world to come, here mentioned, is not the intermediate state, but the period of divine consummation following the resurrection and the judgment, can we even then infer that at any and all times between death and that judgment forgiveness is possible, and is in fact conferred on uncounted millions who have died without receiving pardon through Christ in the present life? Can this single text be reasonably supposed to contain so comprehensive a doctrine of forgiveness, and one nowhere else suggested in the divine Word? The inference is stupendous: the conclusion in effect controverts all that the Bible teaches elsewhere on the subject. In such circumstances the careful student of the Word can not fail, after full examination, to accept rather the conclusion of Alford, (*Comm. in loc.*) that in the entire silence of Scripture elsewhere on any such doctrine as that of forgiveness after death, every principle of sound interpretation requires that we should resist the introduction of it on the strength of a single text like this.

The third class of inferential passages quoted in support of this dogma, is that which appears to suggest a possible limitation of punishment in the future life.—Apart from those in which the word *αἰών* and its derivatives are used, the number of these texts is small. Some of them are those Old Testament passages which express in strong and often pathetic terms the unwillingness of God that any should perish, His reluctance to afflict the sons of men, His fatherly pain when chastisement and condemnation are found to be indispensable. But special stress is laid on the occasional teachings of the New Testament, and particularly of Christ himself, in this direction. Our Lord, for example, warns men who fail to agree with the adversary while in the way with him, that they shall be cast into prison, and shall by no means come out thence until they have paid the uttermost farthing; and this is taken as an implication that in the gracious economy of the future life, such payment of the uttermost farthing, with consequent release from further penalty, may or can occur. Our Lord also teaches that, while some are beaten with many, others are beaten with few stripes; hence it is inferred that in the mercy of God the latter may therefore be released from continuous or final retribution. He declares that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented in sack-cloth and ashes, had they had the spiritual opportunity granted to Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum; hence it is supposed that, in view of their smaller guilt and their possible repentance, these may be forgiven hereafter. The inference of Dorner (*Theol.* § 153) that the inhabitants of Tyre and Sidon would, if death were

III. Passages suggesting the limitation of Punishment hereafter.



the close of probation, be damned because, through no fault of their own, they had not seen and accepted Christ, involves a singular misapprehension of the divine teaching. The lesson of our Lord clearly is the simple and familiar one, that retribution hereafter would be in just proportion to spiritual privilege enjoyed in this life. The obvious implication is that for them, and for all men, whether within or without the range of the Gospel, the decisions of the judgment will turn, not upon what they may have done in the intermediate state, but on their experiences, purposes, characters in the present life. He also announces that He came to seek and save the lost; and we may justly infer, it is said, that He will not end his sacred search until He find them and deliver them from their doom of sin, though He should find them after death has closed their earthly probation. On the basis of such declarations, it is held that we have sufficient ground for the hope that to innumerable multitudes in the state of the dead as to the prodigal son on earth, mercy will be extended, and punishment be limited or remitted altogether.<sup>1</sup>

But these texts are quoted chiefly for the corroboration they are supposed to furnish to the interpretation given by the advocates of the dogma under consideration, to the Greek term *αἰών* and its derivatives. That interpretation maintains that this term is always either a timeless word—a term of quality, or a word indicating not everlastingness or eternity in the ordinary sense, but rather a period or age or era, which will somewhere come to an end, as the present age or period will be somewhere terminated. It may be admitted that in

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<sup>1</sup>Ps. 103: 8-13. Lam. 3: 31-3. Ezekiel 18: *passim*. Matt. 5: 25-6. Luke 12: 47-8. Matt. 18: 11-14. Rom. 9: 15-23. Heb. 12: 10. Luke 15: 11-32; and numerous other passages of like import.

John 17: 3, and possibly in two or three other passages the word eternal is primarily descriptive of quality rather than of duration. Life eternal, as realized in the spiritual knowledge of God and of the Messiah, is indeed, as has been claimed, life in the largest, highest, noblest sense—life unbounded, expansive, free, sublime above all present experience or imagination. But how impracticable it is to attempt to carry such a meaning through the entire New Testament, any one who makes the experiment will soon discover. In nearly all cases, it is impossible to exclude from the word the element of time,—time not bounded by definite eras or ages, but time running on forever and forever. If in some instances the term describes a definite æon (possibly in Rom. 16: 25. Eph. 3: 9–11) still in most, all limitation is obviously dropped off, and the word simply indicates interminable duration.<sup>1</sup>

Nor can any distinction be established between the word as applied on the one side to the blessedness of the righteous, and on the other side to the misery of the wicked. This is proved incidentally by the synonymous negatives, contained in such words as not and

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<sup>1</sup>PUSEY (*What is of Faith*, etc.), controverting the claim of FAR-  
NAR, quotes from Riddell, characterized as "the best Greek Ox-  
ford scholar of his day," to the effect that the word *αἰώνιος* signifies  
strictly, even absolutely, eternal existence, such as shall be when  
time shall be no more. In the New Testament it occurs seventy-one  
times; of eternal life, forty-four times; of Almighty God, His  
Spirit and His glory, three times; of the kingdom of Christ, his  
redemption, the blood of his covenant, the Gospel, salvation, our  
habitation in heaven, each once or more; of the glory laid up for  
us, thrice; of our inheritance, etc., several times; of eternal fire,  
thrice; of punishment, judgment, destruction, four times; pp.  
28–39.—See also MOSES STUART, *Future Punishment*; especially his  
clear and exhaustive exposition of these terms, as employed in  
the N. T.; and of the nearly synonymous words used in the O. T.

never, when used to describe either that blessedness or that misery. For, if such corroborative forms of speech are stronger on one side than on the other, it is plain that the greater stress is laid, especially by our Lord himself, on the endlessness of the misery visited upon the ungodly. And from all this it is an inevitable conclusion that no attempt can be made to put limitations on the term, eternal, with its correlatives, when applied to the just retributions of God which will not imperil the foundations of hope and assurance in the case of those who believe. If eternal punishment is limited and may somewhere end, it must be admitted that eternal life is limited also, and may somewhere come to an awful close. Well does Augustine (*Kingdom of God*, Book XXI: 22) declare it a fond fancy to suppose that eternal punishment means long continued punishment merely, while eternal life means life without end, since Christ in the very same passage spoke of both in similar terms in one and the same sentence. If both destinies are eternal, he adds, then we must either understand both as long continued but at last terminating, or both as endless. To say in one and the same sense, that life eternal shall be endless, while punishment eternal shall come to an end, is the height of absurdity.

The attempt to show that the punishment of sin is limited, and may in numberless instances be brought to an end, therefore fails whether it be derived as a possible implication from some sporadic texts, or asserted on the ground of an established limitation of the term, *αἰών*, and its derivatives. To offset still further any such interpretation, we might properly introduce not only such passages as contain this decisive term, but also the general teaching of Scripture, first, as to the eternity of sin, and secondly as to the consequent per-

petuity of punishment.<sup>1</sup> Nor is it sufficient to say that the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost is the only sin which is to survive through all the ages of an eternal future; since this sin can from the nature of the case exist only in conjunction with a vast multitude of attendant and correlated sins, to which a like perpetuity must be assigned, in the case of every such blasphemer. In fact, Scripture nowhere sets this forth as the one imperishable offence, but simply as the crowning form assumed by human wickedness, and one for which there is, in many instances, no pardon even on this side of the grave.<sup>2</sup> Neither can it be said that the sins of those who die without a distinct knowledge of Christ and a distinct rejection of his salvation, are such as require only temporary retribution, since no one can judge how heinous the least sin is in the sight of God, or can say that that sin will not be persisted in hereafter as well as here, and be punished therefore so long as it survives within the soul. In a word, we are nowhere taught that all sins but one die out in the intermediate state, or that God during that period will overlook or pardon every sin but blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

A fourth class of passages, allied to the preceding, is that relating to the doctrine of the judgment, with special reference to its nature and design, and to the time

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 3: 29. REV. VERS.; hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal *sin*. Note the case of the devil and his angels, Matt. 25: 41. Rev. 20: 10. Banishment from the presence of the Lord; Rev. 14: 11. Also, 2 Thess. 1: 8-9. Mark 9: 43, etc.

<sup>2</sup>The venerable Tholuck who was at one time inclined to accept the dogma of the restitution of all things, is said (H. B. SMITH, *Theol.*, p. 615) to have been brought back to the Scriptural faith by wrestling with this passage in regard to the sin against the Holy Ghost.

of its occurrence.—It is alleged that we have no evidence that a judgment of every soul takes place at

IV. Passages relating to Judgment, General and Particular. death, or that the eternal estate of those who have not known or embraced the Gospel in this life, is finally decided at the moment of their entrance on the life beyond the grave. The fact of a general judgment at the end of the world, and of a final decision then reached in regard to all men, is generally, though not always, admitted by the advocates of a probation after death. They grant, for the most part, that he who then is righteous will be righteous still, and he who then is unjust or filthy will be unjust or filthy still—unjust and filthy, and therefore under divine condemnation, even forever.

But this doctrine is held to imply that prior to that decisive hour the moral estate of men is indeterminate, with the possible exception of those who have been guilty on earth of the sin which John describes (1 John 5: 16) as the sin unto death. It is urged that our Lord, in depicting the awful scenes of the judgment, (Matt. 25: and elsewhere) teaches by clear implication that up to that day of doom, the wicked are not sent away to everlasting punishment, and are therefore in a state where forgiveness and moral recovery are at least possible. Some indeed regard these passages as describing a restricted rather than an universal judgment—a judgment of those who have professed to be disciples (Matt. 7: 21–28. Luke 13: 25–29,) rather than of all the tribes and races of men: and on this ground conclude that for these tribes and races, knowing not the Gospel, there may be no such strict and solemn adjudication at the hands of Christ. As to this opinion, the words of our Lord himself, in which He describes the entire multi-

tude of mankind as brought before His bar, (Matt. 25: 32) are conclusive:—especially when corroborated by such declarations as that of John in the Apocalypse, (Rev. 20: 12–13) which certainly must include the entire race. In view of such declarations, the universality of this general judgment can hardly be questioned.<sup>1</sup>

As to the former opinion, the true answer is to be found in a right conception of the general judgment itself. That solemn transaction is not so much concerned with the estate of the individual soul: it involves rather a judicial survey of the divine dealings with the world of mankind, in the sphere of nature and in the sphere of grace. So far as individuals are concerned, it will be simply an official confirmation of what has already transpired in respect to their character and deserts,—the divine estimate of each, being published and justified before all. To claim that this is needless, if the condition and fate of each soul has been fixed at death, is to misapprehend the main purpose of such an announcement. For, although the question of individual character and desert be thus settled, there may be many reasons in the relations of soul to soul, in the bearings of one life on the character and destinies of another, and in the connections of each and all with the divine government and administration, which in the eye of God are quite sufficient to require such a comprehensive and final adjudication. That great event is concerned with the race rather than with the individual

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<sup>1</sup> See also O. T. intimations or foreshadowings: Ps. 9: 8. 50: 3–6. Isa. 34: 4. Dan. 12: 2. Joel 3: 1, &c. N. T. declarations and suggestions are abundant: Matt. 11: 22–4. 24: 36–7. Luke 10: 14. Acts 17: 31. Rom. 2: 5. 2 Cor. 5: 10, &c. It is impossible to limit the scope and sweep of all these and many kindred passages, however strongly this may be demanded by the interests of a favorite speculation.

man. It involves the comprehensive exposition of the dealings of God with mankind, both in providence and moral administration, and in the special economy of grace. All mankind will then see beyond a peradventure both what the divine purposes were, and through what methods and agencies these holy purposes were carried into execution. Even the untutored pagan, the infantile mind, the ignorant and the perverse and the unbelieving, will then know what the design of God was concerning them, and how tenderly and faithfully that design was wrought out, even to the last. Especially will the full unfolding of the divine plan of things from the creation and the fall onward to the Messiahship of Jesus Christ, and downward through the ages to the complete consummation of His earthly Church and Kingdom, constitute the central feature of that solemn assize. While all mankind are included in it, we may well assume that this final exhibition of Deity to the world will be thus concentrated around the Gospel: all history being read in its relations to the history of redemption, and all the connections of that Gospel with the character and career of humanity, however obscure or remote now, being then brought clearly into light.

Are we then to infer that until that decisive day, through all the ages of their intermediate condition, all men excepting those who have blasphemed the Holy Ghost, or have openly rejected Christ in this life, are to be kept in an indeterminate estate,—neither finally accepted nor finally rejected of God? This can not be true respecting the righteous man, since his rewards and crowns are said to be conferred on him at death. Neither can we regard all the rest of mankind as living hereafter as really as here in a state of probation, with

character and condition undetermined: and in a state of probation which will not be brief, as at the longest it is brief in this world, but will continue through measureless ages until the judgment day. What intimations can be found in the Scriptures in support of such a view,—what intimations which will compare in distinctness or weight with those which affirm that there is also a particular judgment of each soul of man, occurring at the hour of death—the moment of its transition from time to eternity? The clear teaching of the Bible rather is, that the last judgment is simply the grand completion of a process begun in the case of each man the instant he passes into the eternal state. As to the righteous, we can not doubt that our Lord intended to teach, that the place of Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16: 22) was an assigned and a secure place: that when Stephen looked up into heaven, (Acts 7: 55) he saw there a Savior present in the moment of his last extremity, and ready to receive him on the instant into glory: that Paul, in his desire to depart and be with Christ, (2 Cor. 5: 6–8) contemplated, not a prolonged period of uncertain existence for himself and other believers, to be followed at last, after long ages, by an exaltation to glory, but rather an exaltation instant, sublime, eternal.<sup>1</sup> And as to those who are not believers, on what other ground can we safely stand than that death ends moral probation, whatever the nature or scope of that probation may be? This is the ground assumed by our Lord in the

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<sup>1</sup> Dörner admits that the closely related text, 2 Cor. 5: 10: We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: refers to this particular adjudication at death: *Theol.*, § 153. Other advocates of future probation are inclined to claim that the reference here is to the final judgment.



parables of the talents and the pounds, even in the case of those to whom but one pound or one talent has been intrusted in the present life. In those instances where He describes His own coming to men at the end of their earthly stewardship, He invariably announces the award, not as remote or general, but as personal and immediate. There are also many presumptions in favor of a truth, which is not only inculcated by the Redeemer, but accepted and enforced, often in most impressive connections, by His apostles.<sup>1</sup> The anticipations of the soul consciously guilty and deserving of retribution, the nature even of that probation which comes to every man however besotted or savage, the need of an end of all probation somewhere, and within a relatively short period in the moral life, all contribute to the conclusion that it is appointed unto men to die, and after death to be individually judged. Against such presumptions, the doctrine of a probation prolonged until the final judgment, or extended through some measureless period in eternity, can hardly gain credence among Christian men.

It will be observed that the four classes of Scripture proof thus far considered, are serviceable in this dis-

V. Passages revealing Probation after Death; especially I. Peter 3: 18-20.

ussion simply for the inference which they are supposed to justify,—the inference that on each or all of these grounds we may properly anticipate that, in the case of the vast majority of mankind, probation will be graciously extended far beyond the present life, if not beyond the final judgment itself.—

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<sup>1</sup> Without recurring to references or intimations in the Old Testament, we note as conclusive the following direct declarations in the New: Matt. 7: 26-7. Mark 8: 36-7. Heb. 9: 27. 10: 26-7.

Advancing now from the study of these classes of passages, we may turn to those which are supposed more directly to affirm the establishing of such a kingdom of grace in the intermediate state; especially the crucial text, 1 Peter 3: 18-20. What is affirmed by those who hold to such a future probation is, not that men will there regenerate and save themselves, or will become holy through the natural influences of such an environment, or that some disciplinary or purgatorial process conducted by God will there make them holy; but rather that the Gospel,—the offer of Christ as a Savior and the acceptance by each soul of that offer,—has been introduced into that world of disembodied spirits, and is now actually in force in that strange sphere, persuading, convicting, converting innumerable multitudes who either have not known of this Gospel here, or have known it so imperfectly that they deserve another opportunity to be saved or to save themselves through it. If this affirmation be true, the strong presumption is that abundant evidences of a fact so vast, so immeasurable in its results, would be found in the Word of God—a Word whose mission is to make this blessed Gospel known to men, and through it to bring the world back to holiness and to Him. If such evidences can not be found, the presumption against such a dogma on biblical grounds is overwhelming.

To quote the apostolic declaration that Christ is Lord of the dead as well as the living, or to point to His Messianic kingdom as by its own nature universal, and therefore extended into the realms of the dead, or to press into service any other merely general utterance of like import culled from the Scriptures, is really to prove nothing as to the manner or form in which His Messiahship or His holy kingdom is to be administered in

other worlds than this. Just as his own declarations respecting his love for men and his gracious purpose to seek and to save the lost, or his free invitations to all the sick and wearied in spirit to seek his face and help, or the wide evangel of grace proclaimed by his followers in his name, and recorded in his inspired messages to mankind, steadfastly refuse to be employed to sustain such a dogma, so these more generic declarations spontaneously refuse to it their support, even by inference. For it requires but slight study of all these gracious teachings, in whatever variety, to see that they belong in form and in spirit to time,—that they are addressed to men, and that they leave no room whatever for the implication that the love and the grace, the Messiahship and the redemption here set forth, are extended in any way whatever into the realm of the dead.

But these texts are usually quoted for the countenance which they are supposed to furnish to the only passage of Scripture that can be said to contain any direct suggestion of a Gospel to be preached to the dead: 1 Peter 3:18–20. That this text is difficult and even obscure or perhaps unfathomable, is abundantly evident from the wide variety of interpretations given to it. A full list of these interpretations need not be furnished here. Did our Lord preach in person, or through Noah, or by his Holy Spirit through some other instrument? Who were the spirits in prison to whom He preached,—those who perished in the flood only, or the ancient patriarchs and saints only, or all of every land and nation who died before his own death on Calvary; or was this—as some have urged—a divine ministry addressed, not to men, but to Satan and other rebellious and damned spirits? What was this preaching,—a proclamation of His own resurrection and triumph over death,

or an announcement of His royal authority as Mediator over all the dead as well as the living, or the official beginning of an era of judgment and retribution to be inflicted from that time henceforth, or the formal announcing to the dead of the beginning of a new epoch of grace now established on earth through his death, or the publishing of a glad evangel of grace provided in eternity for all or for certain classes of the dead? And what were the consequences of His ministration—an instant conviction penetrating the unrighteous dead that they were forever lost, in the hands of an angry God; or a blessed hope entrancing multitudes, if not all hearts, with the expectation of forgiveness, acceptance, adoption, and life everlasting, made possible through His advent into the world of the departed? And, back of all these questionings, lies the fundamental inquiry, where did the spirit of our Lord go and abide during the thirty or forty hours, in which His soul and His body were sundered, and dwelt apart? Did He go directly to Paradise, there to receive and welcome into glory the spirit of the dying thief on the Cross; or, as Calvin has suggested, into the depths of hell itself, there to taste for himself, and as part of his humiliation and sacrifice, the very torments of the damned; or, simply into some other world, beyond this realm of sight and sense, there in holy calmness to await the appointed hour of his resurrection?

In the presence of such perplexing questions, as yet unsolved by the most careful exegesis, and perhaps insoluble with such light as is now obtainable, is it not an astounding evolution which derives from this obscure text, and its possible corollary in 1 Peter 4:6, the notion that our Lord, during the few hours between His death and His resurrection, went into the world of the

dead, and there set up an economy of grace which was a duplicate, substantially, of that instituted by Him during His incarnate life on the earth—an economy which has continued down to the present time, with essentially the same truths, incentives, warnings, that characterize the Gospel among men; and which will continue for long periods until every soul among the dead has heard of Christ and had full opportunity to receive Him, and possibly until all the dead have actually received Him, and have been converted and saved through Him? The astounding quality of this hypothesis grows upon us, as we strive to contemplate all that is involved in such a stupendous process,—the proclamation and exposition of the Gospel in such ways as, to some extent at least, to convince even those who have rejected it here,—the ministrations of Providence and of the Holy Spirit in such measure as shall overcome the willful hindrances which have resisted them in this life,—the presence of a Church, of sacraments and ordinances, of a living and continuous ministry, or of other administrative agencies analogous to those which in this world are brought, and often vainly brought, to bear upon the ignorance, the willfulness, the wickedness of men. To assume all this, and much more, on the basis of a single text, with but one or two possibly corroborating passages, and in the presence of the studied silence of the remaining Scriptures respecting a fact of such immense moment, and in the presence also of innumerable passages teaching us that now is the accepted time, and our brief earthly day the appointed day of salvation, is certainly a process without parallel in the history of human theologizing.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The story of the diversified attempts to explain and utilize this vexed passage is one of the most striking in the history of biblical

Without attempting any exposition of this passage, the author may venture to suggest affirmatively that the apostle is apparently running an illustrative parallel between the Gospel proclaimed by Noah under the direction of the pre-incarnate Messiah to the disobedient world of that earlier age, and the same Gospel as proclaimed by the incarnate Redeemer himself and those called to be his disciples. His aim in introducing this historic parallel, as seen in the context, appears to have been the encouragement of believers in carrying forward, through whatever of difficulty or trial, this continuous and sublime work. The selection of the particular age and class used in illustration is explained by the peculiar relations of the first judgment by water to that second and conclusive judgment by fire, on which the apostle so strongly endeavors in both of his epistles to fix the thought of the church in his day. The ministry of Christ by Noah and the ministry of Christ in His own person were, he assures the saints of his time, to be the type of theirs, and the sufferings of Noah and of Christ were to be emblematic of the fiery trials that should come upon them also, in their prosecution of the same ministry. In like manner, the repentance and faith which Noah had demanded from the men of his

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exegesis. Commentators, ancient and modern, from Origen and Augustine down to Farrar and Plumptre, with various bias and purpose, have tried their hands upon it. The names and the expositions and the disputes would constitute a considerable library. (See Excursus, *in loc.*; LANGE, *Comm.*) Dörner, Martensen, Nitzsch among the Germans, Maurice and his successors among the Anglican clergy, Smyth and Munger and the Andover school of New Theology, have affirmed with vigor its proper application to their theory of future probation;—indeed, without such application, that theory totters to the ground, as a fancy wholly unendorsed by Revelation. The best presentation of this probationary interpretation, is that of PLUMPTRE, *Spirits in Prison*.

day, and which Our Lord had also required, as John the Baptist in the spirit of Noah and of the prophets had done before him, were likewise to be set forth by them also as the essential conditions of grace; and this was to be done although but few, as in the days of Noah, should heed the saving message. The sin of disobedience, persisted in notwithstanding the call of grace, was essentially one and the same sin, whether before the advent or after it; and those who had rejected the earlier invitations of divine grace, and died in disobedience, the apostle describes as now in Hades as in a prison, just as in the second epistle he describes the fallen angels as in chains, reserved unto the final judgment. Brief, abrupt, incomplete as the parallel seems, both its historical quality and its spiritual and practical aim are sufficiently discernible, amid the perplexities which the phraseology at several points seems to involve. At least is it not clear that the familiar and appropriate parallelism thus brought to light, is a thousand fold more likely to be the true interpretation of the text, than the alternative explanation demanded by the dogma under consideration,—an explanation for which we find distinct corroboration nowhere else within the revealed and revealing Word?

The contiguous language of Peter respecting the Gospel preached to the dead, (I. 4: 6) readily accepts the same explanation. The preaching is still the historic proclamation in the days of Noah, and the class addressed are still the disobedient generation who despised that proclamation, and with whom the Spirit of God refused (Gen. 6: 3) longer to strive. The preaching occurred (BENGEL, *in loc*) while they were still alive, though now they were dead—a form of description not without occasional warrant in biblical usage. Others

have suggested that the dead here mentioned included not only the generation to whom Noah, the preacher of righteousness, ministered in the name of the coming Messiah, but also the patriarchs, and all the pious Hebrews, who had passed away from life in faith prior to the advent. In that case the Gospel preached would have included all those preliminary manifestations of grace, such as the Messianic promises and the Mosaic economy, which exhibited to these earlier ages the salvation that was afterwards to come through a crucified Redeemer. Another alternative interpretation refers the phrase to those who, after the advent, had heard the Gospel, and had embraced it before their death; or more specifically to those who had already suffered persecution and martyrdom for their allegiance, and whom the apostle describes as judged indeed by men, and condemned so far as the flesh was concerned, but yet kept alive in spirit by the preserving power of God, and waiting in patience for the day of His more righteous judgment.

But were it admitted that this phrase included not only the generation of Noah, or the other classes named, but all the dead of all lands and generations,—and were it also admitted that our Lord, during the brief interval between His death and His resurrection, went into the world of the dead and proclaimed salvation to all the innumerable hosts there gathered together, still the utter silence of the Bible as to the outcome of this proclamation is well-nigh conclusive against the enormous inference derived from it. Van Oosterzee frankly admits, (*Theol. of the New Testament*) that the apostle makes no attempt to answer the question whether this divine act was confined to some one generation or class of the dead, or what form this gracious proclamation assumed,



or what result, if any, followed it. Other advocates of the dogma of probation after death on the basis of these two passages, make similar admissions. Is not this silence conclusive? Is it possible that Peter would in such a connection have presented the doctrine asserted by these advocates, without any reference whatever to the results of such a proclamation of salvation to the dead? And is it credible that both he and the other inspired writers, and our Lord himself who knew all the issues of His redemptive work, should have left the Church in absolute ignorance on a point of such immeasurable content and moment?

In this connection a sixth group of passages is summoned into requisition, somewhat loosely, for its sup-

**VI. Passages illustrating Future Probation: Instances.**

posed support of the dogma of a Gospel preached unto the dead.—The parable of Dives and Lazarus, for example, is explained as showing, on the one hand, the divine mercy toward the condemned—a mercy seen in the attitude and counsels of Abraham, and, on the other side, the penitential temper of the unhappy rich man, and his gracious longing for the salvation of his brethren still in the flesh.<sup>1</sup> Is it not clear, however, that such inferences are wholly foreign to the purpose of our Lord in the utterance of this most suggestive parable? Are we at liberty to utilize the simple accessories of such an allegory, as if they were so many dogmatic affirmations, designed to teach explicit doctrine on points quite outside of the main aim of the allegory itself? But further, does not this interpretation fail altogether to catch the purport of the language of Abraham, the true significance of his attitude and

<sup>1</sup> Cox, *Salvator Mundi*, pp. 210-11.

relation toward the unhappy soul with whom he is for the moment conversing? Is not the patriarch, in fact, justifying to the conscience of Dives the divine dealings with him in his present estate of retribution,—showing him that God is right, in view of his selfish and sensuous living while on earth, in consigning him to his present condition of anguish? And is not the attitude of the rich man one of remorse, of conscious guilt and conscious suffering, with no mood of confession, and no sign of a willingness to accept a Gospel for himself, if one were offered? His eyes may indeed be opened, so that he now sees things more as they are: he discovers that his estimate of life was false throughout: he thinks of his brethren who are living as he was, and who soon will be with him in his present state of torment: he mourns over their impending fate: but what evidence, however slight, does the parable afford, even on the broadest possible interpretation of it, either that redemption from sin and guilt was offered to him, or that he would penitently and trustfully have accepted it, if offered? And can there be any reasonable ground for the conclusion that our Lord intended in this touching allegory to teach a doctrine as to the coming life, of which He has given us no hint in any of his direct teaching, and with which such teaching seems often to be in irreconcilable contrast?

The restoration of the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7: 11–15) is also quoted as an actual instance in which probation was prolonged after death,—in which a second opportunity for salvation was granted to one whose first or natural probation had been already closed. The restoration of the daughter of Jairus, and of the brother of Mary and Martha, can not be employed in like manner, partly because the restored maiden may have been

too young to be morally accountable for the rejection of Christ, and partly because Lazarus may have already been a disciple. Obviously, the miraculous element in these three instances of restoration to life removes them beyond the range of any and all inference, such as is proposed in the case of the young man of Nain. But further, if there is in fact a probation after death, why did our Lord call him back to a second earthly probation,—unless indeed this earthly probation is more favorable than that into which he would otherwise have entered? Have we, moreover, any reason for supposing that this resident of a Galilean village, not far away from Capernaum, had never seen or heard of the Savior before, and had never had an opportunity to receive or reject Him as the Messiah? And if he had enjoyed such opportunity, are we not led on to the broad inference that a second probation will be granted by a merciful Savior to others, or even to all, who may have heard of Him and despised Him in the present life? We turn from such conjectures and possibilities with a deep conviction that it is little less than a travesty upon the loving act of our Lord—an act whose true design is apparent to every reader—to make it the basis of an inference so remote, and so absolutely out of harmony with its proper relations and meaning.

The friendly allusions of Paul, in his official letter to Timothy, (II. Tim. 1: 16–18. 4: 19) to Onesiphorus and his household, have been referred to as showing the propriety of offering prayer, not merely for the surviving family, but for the dead friend and associate of the Apostle in Christian service. It is supposed first, without any clear warrant, that Onesiphorus had died, and then it is urged that the devout hope of Paul, that the dead saint would receive mercy from the Lord at the

last great day of judgment, indicates the possibility of like mercy in the case of others. If the latter interpretation were granted, nothing would be proved by it unless it be that prayer for the pious dead is admissible, and this is simply the pernicious doctrine of the Church of Rome—not that prayers are authorized, as even she does not maintain, for all the dead. Yet it is noticeable that Maurice, Farrar, Plumptre, Newman Smyth and others do in substance accept this sweeping doctrine, and from this passage and other passages, and on their general theory, justify the propriety of praying for all the dead.<sup>1</sup> This is certainly consistent: for if there be such a gracious process of salvation going on in the intermediate state, not only should earnest prayer be offered habitually by the whole church on earth, but whatever else, in the form of a contribution of interest or merit, or even of pecuniary sacrifice, is possible, ought to be sedulously, universally, hopefully brought into service. There is indeed no other outcome to this theory, unless the position be taken that the Christ who hears our prayers for the unconverted in this life, refuses to hear us when we pray for the salvation of those in another state of being, whose salvation He is said to desire and labor for there, as earnestly as He has desired and labored for ours in this life.

The hypothetical statement of our Lord respecting the possible repentance of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt. 10: 15. 11: 24) in case these doomed cities had heard the Gospel from His lips, has sometimes been adduced in this connection as proof that the message of grace

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<sup>1</sup> MAURICE, *Theological Essays*: Note on the Athanasian Creed. PLUMPTRE, *Spirits in Prison*: Essays IX and X. NEWMAN SMYTH, *Orthodox Theol.*, p. 128, and Note. The latter author advocates prayers for the dead as a feature in our public worship.

which they had never been privileged to hear in this life, would be proclaimed to them in another. The inference misses entirely the lesson inculcated by our Lord, which is simply the lesson of relative responsibility consequent upon relative opportunity. His language could not possibly have been apprehended by those who heard Him, as implying a further probation to be enjoyed by the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah after the first judgment of God had swept them into eternity. The hypothetical character of his statement, the aim of his discourse, his other references to these cities and their doom (Luke 17: 29), absolutely forbid such an interpretation. Had He intended to teach the doctrine claimed, when giving the twelve their great commission, He would beyond all question have presented the truth in some other form than this.

These are the more conspicuous instances of the class of texts to which we here refer,—texts which are supposed to corroborate in some way the fancied teaching of Peter as to the possibility and the fact of a *post mortem* probation. How unsatisfactory such quotations are, and how dangerous is the principle which permits such use of the Scriptures and justifies itself in it, it is not difficult to see. What known error or heresy is there which, availing itself of a principle so latitudinarian, could not gather up some semblance of scripturalness, as a veil to hide its real character, as a departure from the true doctrine of the Eternal Word?

Still another series of passages is called into service at this point,—those which are supposed to indicate that unbelief or the rejection of Christ, is the only adequate ground of human condemnation.—These are found largely in the teaching of our Lord Himself. He di-

rectly sets forth the refusal to believe on Him as the great sin of humanity. He counts those who have heard His words and rejected His offers, as the chief of sinners—as deserving the sorest condemnation. He affirms that he who believeth not, shall be lost, and be lost because of his unbelief. And his apostles lay like stress on the necessity for faith, on the guilt of refusing to exercise faith, on the peril of delay, on the doom of the unbeliever.<sup>1</sup> Every thing indeed seems, in the New Testament, to turn on the specific issue of belief or disbelief. How then, it is asked, can they be condemned who have never had the opportunity to know of Christ and His redemption in this life, and who therefore have never rejected Him!

**VII. Passages presenting Unbelief as the only Ground of Condemnation.**

It is by no means to be denied that unbelief in Christ and His Gospel is the supreme issue and test in life, so far as those are concerned who have ever heard of Him. It is not to be questioned that the refusal so to believe, even if it be the casual refusal of a child or of one who has never enjoyed special religious privileges, is a special sin; and that a continuous refusal, persisted in in defiance of all the gracious persuasions of the Holy Spirit, is the culminating sin—the sin unto death. As to all who live within the geographic range of the Gospel—who do in fact hear its glad sound and feel in their souls its tender influence, and are in any measure drawn toward it, we can say nothing other than the Master said in announcing His great and final commission: He that believeth not, shall be condemned.

But the true interpretation of this solemn declaration is fully seen only when the connection of this sin with

<sup>1</sup> John 3: 18, 36, 16: 9. Mark 16: 14-16. Rom. 10: 9-12. Eph. 4: 18. 2 Peter 3: 3-4. 1 John 4: 3.

all other sins of men, actual and possible, is properly discerned. The principle of evil, the principle of revolt from God, the principle of selfish indulgence in open or in blind antagonism to the principle of submission and obedience, is no less apparent in every sin that man ever commits. And while the sinfulness of men may and does culminate in the awful crime of rejecting Christ, yet the spirit which leads on to such rejection—this principle of evil, which is the root of all actual transgression—may and does exist as truly in the breast of a savage far away from the sound of the call of grace. Hence it follows—as we shall see more fully hereafter—that wherever this spirit is found, wherever man is living under the bad law of self, indifferent to the summons of conscience to a higher life, guilt is incurred, and condemnation more or less distinct and awful must follow.

This is clearly the teaching of our Lord. There are those indeed who are beaten with few stripes, and these stripes are in proportion to actual guilt in each case; but the fact that the guilt is small, furnishes no warrant for the implication that such persons have incurred no condemnation whatever. The strictness with which Christ always associates penalty even with the smallest departure from the path of duty, is obvious to every student of his teachings; and herein He follows what we all recognize to be the standard of perfect equity—of the completest righteousness. Paul in like manner (Rom. 2: 11-16) lays as much stress on the real, though it be smaller, guilt of those who have sinned without law, as of those who have sinned under the law. The entire aim of his mighty argument is to show that all mankind are truly sinful, and as sinful, are under condemnation, and are therefore in need of just such a sal-

vation as he was commissioned to announce. If God had not concluded or included all under unbelief, in this broad sense of that term, He would not have provided, as Paul declares that He has provided, a scheme of mercy for all,—a scheme which, making itself first known to the Jew, was ultimately to be made known and be made the ground of acceptance or condemnation to the Gentile also—to all mankind.

Postponing for the present the broader discussion of this great problem of human guilt, we may here conclude from this introductory view, that we are in no sense at liberty to say that, because unbelief in Him is said by Christ to be the supreme ground of condemnation, none but those who have directly and historically known Him, ought to be condemned. A deeper, broader principle comes in here; the principle that the refusal to believe in Christ is simply the culminating form of that comprehensive sinfulness which lies in human nature, and which in ten thousand minor forms is ever arraying the race against both the equitable claims of God and the incentives of His holy love.

The seven groups of texts now passed in review will be found to include all, or nearly all, the particular Scriptures adduced, especially from the New Testament, in support of the dogma under consideration.—It

**VIII. The Gospel Temporal and Earthly in Scope.**

must be obvious that their testimony is in large degree inferential, and their direct support of the dogma drawn from them altogether inadequate and inconclusive. However skillfully arranged, however broadly or ardently interpreted, they furnish in fact no solid foundation for reasonable belief in a Gospel introduced, published, efficient and triumphant within the intermediate



state. Especially will this conclusion be made apparent when we set over against these sporadic quotations the direct and continuous testimony of our Lord Himself, and the corroborating witness of His apostles and of his Church, respecting this Gospel as belonging exclusively to earth and time. Two or three familiar references to this patent fact may fitly conclude the present survey :

Recurring first to the transcendent mission of the Messiah, as it was intimated in type and shadow, foretold in psalm and prophecy, manifested at the incarnation and in the various stages of His mediatorial career, and described by the evangelists and apostles, the overwhelming fact is that we find nothing like a hint anywhere of any relation which this redemptive scheme was to sustain to other beings than men, and men living on the earth. Our Lord Himself in describing His mission (John 9: 4, and elsewhere) directly limits his Messianic activity to the brief day of his earthly life, and foretells his own passage at death, as well as ours, into that night in which no man can work,—that night of sacred repose from which afterwards He appeared, as Paul declares, as the first-fruits of them that sleep. Of the notion of a redemptive work, to be carried on after his earthly decease, within the world of the dead, no word from Him seems to furnish any distinct or conclusive suggestion. Millions on millions had died before his advent; but while He sometimes refers to them, as in the case of the smitten cities of the plain, He in no way intimates that his redemption was in any sense for them, or for others in like condition. He alludes to the patriarchs and saints of the Old Testament as saved substantially through faith in Him; but never does He intimate that it is any part of his

mission to preach to spirits in prison, or to carry his redemptive plan into operation within the realms of the dead. Is not this utter silence of the Savior in respect to such an extension of his mediatorial work—a silence invariably maintained in all his references to that work, and in circumstances where we might have expected at least some hint or suggestion respecting a matter of such immense moment—entirely conclusive against the dogma we are considering?

Again, when He is commissioning His apostles and the seventy to proclaim His Gospel to mankind, He gives them no hint of any work which they were to do in any other worlds than this: He promises them only rest and reward, and exaltation on twelve thrones of judgment, as the outcome after death of their earthly service. Nor does He intimate that this earthly service was to be a partial work, to be carried to its full consummation in Hades. He speaks much indeed of that other life, floods its vast spaces with holy light, draws comfort and strength from it for His followers among men; yet from the beginning to the end of His fellowship and teaching, He leaves them under no other impression than that the great work to which He was calling them, was a work whose beginning, continuance and consummation were to be realized on earth. In like manner, when at his ascension he gave His Church her last command, and sent her forth to preach the Gospel to every creature, and assured her of his own continuous presence and power as a pledge that what she thus undertook would be accomplished, even the uttermost parts of the earth becoming his possession through her ministry, He maintained the same absolute silence as to the carrying of this Gospel into the regions of the dead. Even after, according to the

interpretation given to the vexed passage in I. Peter, He had come back from his brief sojourn among the dead, though He saw and conversed with his disciples again and again, and spoke of His mission and his triumph, He said not a word to them about that mission to the world of spirits which this interpretation affirms. In view of these facts, does not the interpretation become wholly incredible?

Again, if we study the mission of the Church to the world, as illustrated in the Acts of the Apostles, as set forth by Paul and the other leaders of organized Christianity, and as further illuminated by the strong light of providence and history, we still find no trace of this dogma, in either precept or practice. Under the divine command, the Church went forth joyfully, not to introduce a work which was to be carried on much farther in another world than this, but to prosecute a task which was to reach its completion here, and whose completion was to be at once the glory of earth and the unending song of heaven. The Gospel which the Church received was, in its structure, its principles and methods, and in the experiences which it induced, obviously a thing of earth and time. Its adaptations were thoroughly human throughout: it applied itself to life as it was, and fitted itself exactly to the current conditions of man as man. Its offers were all present offers: nowhere could one be found which looked to an acceptance of it in a future estate. Its injunctions and warnings were also present and immediate: and it forbade even a postponement of its claims to some future day or year in this life. At every point, it seemed to be a Gospel for this world: and as such the Church received and proclaimed it everywhere, with apparently no thought or dream of any relation which this saving scheme did or

could sustain outside of the present life. The suggestive silence of Christ has its counterpart here in the silence of His apostles and His church. And we may well ask, how is such silence to be interpreted, if we are not led by it to say that a *post mortem* probation is something which the church in the first century never recognized, as a fact or a motive in her great ecumenical work for humanity?

## CHAPTER III.

### *GENERAL TESTIMONY OF SCRIPTURE.*

MUCH is said by the advocates of the dogma under examination respecting what is termed the higher plane of Christianity. The phrase is intended by them to indicate certain elevated and generic aspects of the Christian system, which are supposed to furnish a loftier and clearer ground than any survey of particular texts could give, from which to estimate the claims and worth of their favorite opinion. Vigorous protest is made among them against what are regarded as narrow, technical, specializing ways of attaining and describing divine truth; and what is described as a more natural and sympathetic mode of interpreting Scripture is urged as a substitute. According to this new mode, the Bible is to be studied, it is said, not as a magical book, but as a living book,—not to get the plain meaning of the words simply, but to ascertain the very truth itself in some enlarged and comprehensive guise. We are not to pick out texts here and there, and to put them together in order to form a doctrine; thus creating a theology which is described as both intolerable to human nature, and contrary to the real intent and spirit of Christianity. We are exhorted to escape from a theology so created, and to find the truth for ourselves by some broader and sweeter method,—by sweeping airily as on eagle wings across the broad continents of Scripture, and catching as we fly such rangy and cosmic perceptions of inspired truth, as shall enable us the better to know

just what the Bible in its most comprehensive aspects and relationships reveals.<sup>1</sup> And, it is claimed that, studied in this way, the Word of God affords a sure support to the dogma in question, even though the effort to sustain it through particular texts should seem to fail. In view of this claim it becomes important to examine the problem before us in the new method thus advocated.

The first of these general disclosures of Scripture, bearing on the question here discussed, is seen in the asserted relation of Christ to humanity,—a relation which is said to constitute Him the head of the race, and to make the relation of each soul to Him the supreme test of character and of desert. It is claimed (*Progressive Orthodoxy*, in loc) that Christ is revealed in the Bible as the universal man, the head of humanity,—that the incarnation was designed to exhibit him in this capacity, as constitutionally related to the entire human race,—that the atonement also shows him to have suffered with the race, and for the race,—that His mediatorial scheme was not only sufficient in itself for the redemption of all men, but was designed to secure what in some true sense may be called an universal redemption. Man as man, we are told, is perfected in the Son of

**I. Relation of  
Christ to the Human  
Race as Head.**

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<sup>1</sup>PROGRESSIVE ORTHODOXY, *Introduction*; also, p. 102. NEWMAN SMYTH, *Orthodox Theology of To-Day*; preface. T. T. MUNGER, *Freedom of Faith*; Prefatory Essay on the New Theology. The latter writer tells us, (p. 22) that the Bible has somehow, under the new method of study and apprehension, developed what he describes as a certain sense of freedom and humanity which renders impossible a belief in divine sovereignty, and human depravity, and legal atonement, and future retribution, as these doctrines were first formulated, and are still retained in the Old Theology.

Man; his incarnation and mission are the adequate goal toward which all the vast evolution and development of human life have from the outset been tending; our humanity in Him becomes receptive of the divine fullness, and in Him is to be made complete. Not only is His advent a part of the purpose of creation; the incarnation is a necessary feature of the divine process of revelation; the creative design reaches its height of achievement in Him, and in Him alone, as the predestined Lord of the race.

The Scriptural basis for these broad propositions is found, it is alleged, in a few familiar passages, and still more clearly in the general trend and aim of Scripture. Paul, for illustration, declares that it pleased God the Father that in Jesus Christ all fullness should dwell, and that in Him all things both on earth and in heaven should ultimately be reconciled unto Himself. He further affirms that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, all things should be gathered into oneness through Christ, and that to Him, as the appointed Lord of all, every knee should finally bow. He further teaches that, as in Adam all mankind have died, so in Christ shall all mankind be made alive,—the first death, and even the second death, being at last through Him swallowed up in victory. So the writer to the Hebrews represents Christ as the effulgence of the divine glory, and the very image of the divine substance; and as seated in virtue of his nature and his mediatorship at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And in the Apocalypse every creature in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, is represented as ascribing such honor to Christ as the head of the human race—the crown of our humanity, and the Redeemer of all. It is on the basis of such declarations as these, some specific,

others generic, that the dogma of the organic headship of Christ over the human race, viewed in its solidarity, is affirmed.<sup>1</sup> In and through Him, the world, it is said, is as truly a saved, as it is a lost world. Christ is no less to it than Adam; the divine humanity is no smaller than the Adamic humanity; the Spirit is as powerful and as universal as sin; the links that bind the race to evil are correlated by links equally strong binding it to righteousness; MUNGER, *Freedom of Faith*.

Are we then to infer from these biblical declarations, that Christ is the head of humanity in the intermediate state as He is in this life,—that all the myriads congregated in that universe of the dead know him as a Mediator, substantially as we are graciously permitted to know Him here,—that He is offering Himself to them as a Savior, and will continue so to offer Himself until the judgment,—that there, as here, His Spirit is to be as pervasive and powerful as sin, and that through Him our humanity is ultimately to be brought back triumphantly to righteousness and true holiness? Do these biblical revelations carry our minds legitimately onward and upward to the heights of such a generalization as this, and can we claim a distinct warrant from the divine Word for a conclusion of such vastness in itself, and fraught with such immeasurable issues?

One of the ablest of American theologians<sup>2</sup> has left us a complete corrective to this erratic generalization. His position, which is that of Protestant theology well-

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<sup>1</sup>Col. 1: 19-20. Eph. 1: 10. Phil. 2: 10-1. Rom. 14: 9. 1 Cor. 15: 22-8. Heb. 1: 3. Rev. 5: 13. For a larger collection of these texts, see ETERNAL HOPE, Appendix.

<sup>2</sup>HENRY BOYNTON SMITH, *Theol.*, pp. 343-384, on the Nature and Objects of the Incarnation. See especially, p. 365: and the context.



nigh universally, is embodied in the proposition that Christ came not for man, but for sin, and that He is the head, not of the race in the generic sense here alleged, but of humanity as redeemed. Coming into the world, not to set up a constitutional connection between our human nature in general and God, but rather for the sake of sinful human nature, and in order to restore it, He became not the head of humanity as such, but of restored humanity alone. The distinction thus stated is vital to right conceptions, not merely of the incarnation, but of the entire aim, process and outcome of redemption. We have no clear ground in Scripture for the affirmation that an incarnation would have occurred, had our race remained holy: the revealed fact rather is, that human sin was the reason and occasion for the assumption of our nature by the Son of God. The Redeemer to whom Paul so grandly refers in the passages here quoted, and throughout his inspired letters,<sup>1</sup> was a Redeemer appearing on account of sin, and for the rescue of men as sinners. We have no reason whatever for believing that God could not have adequately manifested His love and law to a holy race, as He did to Adam and doubtless does to angels, without sending the Logos to be a Son of man. The intent of that great commission is seen, not in the fact that the race is human, but in the special fact that this human race is sinful, and as such blinded and helpless, and in a true sense lost, until an incarnate Savior appears.

That the opposite view involves serious error, and in fact disparages or ignores that special headship of Christ over all believers which Paul so constantly describes and magnifies, will be at once apparent. A vague gen-

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<sup>1</sup> John 3: 16. Rom. 8: 3. Gal. 4: 4-5. Eph. 1: 22-3. See also, Heb. 2: 14-16. 1 John 3: 8, and numerous other passages.

eralization, based on a wrong notion of the incarnation itself, is half unconsciously substituted for the warm and strong doctrine concerning that headship, so conspicuous in the Pauline Epistles. While it is true that Christ is the incarnate consummation of our humanity, and that his mediatorial work contemplates the certainty of the restoration of this humanity to moral perfection, so far as men exercise repentance and faith in Him, it is very far from being true that every human being will exercise such faith and repentance. Myriads have died, and myriads more are dying, and other myriads will die hereafter, without attaining such experience;—myriads even of those who have had the opportunity of salvation through Him in the present life. In what sense can He be said to be the head of this latter section of the human race? In view of the fate of all who reject Him, as admitted by the advocates of this conception, how can He be described as the universal man—the head of humanity? And, in a word, to what issue do such declarations lead but that sweeping and unscriptural universalism which these advocates earnestly protest against as something wholly alien from their teaching and belief? The simple fact appears to be that one who holds that our Lord is the natural or constitutional head of the human race, can well find no logical termination to his belief, short of that universalistic heresy, which Farrar, for example, almost passionately repudiates, but into which his own beliefs are constantly sweeping him.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ETERNAL HOPE, SERMON III. While vehemently declaring that he is not an Universalist, Farrar asserts that the omission of Art. XLIII. in the Articles of Edward VI. leaves Universalism an open question within the Anglican Church. Maurice, with like disclaimer, advocates the same opinion. In trend and sympathy

It is impossible then to infer from the ideal proposition that Christ is the head of humanity as such, that He will reveal himself sooner or later to every member of our race—if not in this world, then certainly hereafter. The proposition compels its own limitation, and that limitation is fatal to the sweeping inference derived from it. True though it be that every knee shall ultimately bow to Him, whether of creatures in heaven or on earth or under the earth, it is very far from being true that such allegiance will always be offered to Him in loving loyalty rather than in awful dread, or that this allegiance in whatever form will be distinctly preceded by a conscious acceptance or rejection of Him as the one and sole Mediator between God and man. Surely, there is no plane of Christianity, however elevated in the estimation of those who have climbed upward to such perilous heights, where such a proposition can be brought clearly within the horizon of evangelical thought.

In connection with this conception of Christ, a second general class of declarations is introduced, pointing, it is supposed, to the same conclusion,—those which teach the universality of Christianity as a religion, and therefore the universality of redemption through Christianity.—The erroneous process of interpretation apparent in the preceding case, also makes its appearance here. If Christ be a Savior for the race, in the

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both are universalistic.—See the final note of Farrar (p. 225) admitting that, on a literal interpretation of Scripture, the universalist and annihilist views have the decided advantage, yet protesting against these views on the loose and shifting ground that Scripture is not to be interpreted literally. He seems to seek refuge from Universalism in a species of exegetical agnosticism.

sense there affirmed, then the religion He taught must be the one and sole religion for the race. It is said therefore (*PROGRESSIVE ORTHODOXY*, Essay IX) that the biblical representations of the Gospel, and the intrinsic character of the Gospel, show it to be universal, and universal to the same extent that Christ Himself is the universal man and divine head of humanity:—that it is by its own nature the one absolute religion, without specific knowledge of which mankind can not be saved: that any and all limitation put upon our conception of the scope and mission of Christianity does violence to the true character of the Christian scheme, and that all narrower views carry with them a notion of salvation by magic rather than through Christ. It is further declared that the maintenance of this position is not only essential to proper ideas of the Gospel in itself, but furnishes the only defence against the criticism of skeptics of the school of Strauss—a criticism directly based on the alleged lack of such universality. And the inference necessarily follows, it is said, that since all men do not actually know of this universal religion in this life, the opportunity will and must be given to them to know of and accept it in the intermediate state.

The Scriptures quoted in support of this inference will readily recur to memory. Our Lord himself taught that no man could come unto the Father save through Him; that He alone was the light of the world; that whosoever thirsteth must come to Him, and through Him drink of the water of life freely. Peter declared, at the Pentecost, that there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby salvation can be secured; and Paul taught that the natural knowledge of God and natural piety are not sufficient unto such salvation,—

that God was in Christ and in Christ only, reconciling the world unto Himself,—and that in Him the grace of God has appeared to all men, bringing salvation unto all. It is also urged that the Book of Revelation invariably represents Christianity, as well as Christ Himself, in this absolute and universal aspect, as the one and sole religion for man, both in this world and during the long period ending with the judgment. Such is said to be the general view which this divine Word, if not in specific texts, still in its broad intent and impression clearly inculcates.<sup>1</sup>

Here again it is necessary to run a careful line of distinction between a great Christian truth, and an illusive conception of that truth. On the one side it is a glorious truth that, as Christ was in His person and mission fitted to redeem the entire race of man—so endowed and constituted in his mediatorial character as to meet all the moral necessities of any sinful soul through all the earth and for all time, so His holy religion possesses in some sense the same qualities; it is a religion, not for man as man simply, but for man as a sinner, and as such is perfectly adapted to meet the spiritual needs of all sinners, the world over, always. Nothing more would be required in either the Savior or the Gospel, so far as inherent quality and efficaciousness are concerned, to secure the actual salvation of every son and daughter of Adam. In a word, Christianity in this aspect is the only divine, and therefore the only absolute religion; its adaptations are universal, and its claim is unlimited; and so far as the world believes it, the world may be saved through it. We may go farther, and on biblical grounds express the ardent hope that,

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<sup>1</sup>John 14: 6. 1: 9. 8: 12. 7: 37. Acts 4: 12. Rom. 2: 12. 2 Cor. 5: 19. Titus 2: 11-12.

as the world comes to know Christianity as it is, and its holy energies come to be developed more fully in the experience of the race, the time will come when this blessed faith will actually become the saving belief of mankind—the spiritual regeneration of humanity.

But on the other side, this religion, absolute and universal in its nature and capability, is not absolute and universal in fact; and any argument from the abstract conception of its nature which contravenes historic fact, must be defective at some vital point. What is the historic fact? We know that the inspired evolution of this divine faith extended through three or four thousand years of time, and that the process of development during that long period was one which called into requisition all the resources of Deity. We know that such a gradual process was indispensable to the proper implanting of such a religion in such a world as ours, and that while this development was in progress, millions on millions of men died without learning the gracious purpose of God toward mankind. We know further, that since the advent, the historic evolution of this faith in the heart and life of the world has been going on for eighteen centuries, is still going on, and is likely to continue, perchance for ages, before the whole world shall become Christian. We also know the sad fact that, while the Gospel has thus been unfolding itself in time, not only have vast multitudes sat in darkness and in the shadow of death here, but also that millions, under one or another bad incentive, have turned away from this light and rejected the salvation so provided; and at least for those who have thus rejected Christianity, we are assured that there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, no further visitation of grace, no visible ground of pardon or of spiritual restoration.

And we know also that the innumerable myriads that have lived and died without the knowledge of this law, shall be judged without law; and that God, judging the race in righteousness, does pronounce even these, not innocent, but in some deep and true sense guilty in His sight.

These are historic and biblical facts; and they are of such nature as to compel some important modifications of the ideal proposition that Christianity is the absolute and universal religion. The simple truth is that, just as Christ is in fact the head of humanity not by nature but in grace,—the head of humanity so far as humanity is redeemed and no further, so his religion is in fact the religion of humanity only so far as humanity has received it, and been enlightened and saved through it. Like Him who proclaims it, while sufficient for all, it becomes efficient only in those who believe. Beyond this, what can we know or with proper warrant assert? On what ground is it possible for us to affirm any other or broader form of universality for the Gospel than that which historically appears? Set forth as a religion of earth and time, how can we know any thing of its influence or effect beyond the boundaries of earth and time? If the Bible which declares it, had revealed in any distinct form the further fact that all who had not heard of this Savior and this salvation in this world, would hear of them in another, we might believe and welcome the message. But in the silence of Scripture, or on the basis of but two or three vague intimations, not only unsupported by the rest of Scripture but pointedly at variance with it, it surely becomes doubtful and dangerous to infer from any ideal view of the universality of Christianity, that such will be the case,—especially when we know that, so far at least as the multi-

tude of disbelievers in Gospel lands are concerned, Christianity is not thus universal—is in fact of none effect except as a savor of death unto death. To say in such a connection that this is as much a saved as it is a lost world, or that Christ is no less to humanity than Adam, or that His religion is as comprehensive as the race, is either to use words without meaning, or to affirm that through Christ and His Gospel the entire race is in fact redeemed and saved.

Another doubtful generalization, based on certain sweeping conceptions of Scripture, is that which affirms that Divine Love requires that the knowledge of Christ should be made known to all men, if not in this life, then in another.—In support of this position similar texts are quoted,—texts which set forth the love of God in its most comprehensive and universalistic aspects. We are reminded that such love shines out again and again in the Old Testament, as premonitory to the larger revelations of grace in the New,—psalmist and prophet testifying together continuously of the tenderness, the compassion, the restorative affection of the Deity. We are reminded that the Gospel originated in such affection; God so loving the world that He gave his Son to redeem it, and desiring in His compassion to gather together all things, all men, in Christ the anointed Savior. We are reminded that the grace of God, and the wondrous gift of a Savior by grace, have already abounded unto many, and that in the loving purpose of the Father grace now reigns through righteousness in the redemption of unnumbered multitudes—God even concluding all men in unbelief in order that

III. Divine Love  
and Salvation after  
Death.



He might have mercy on all.<sup>1</sup> And from such revelations of the love of God, it is argued that this love will and must make provision for the redemption in other worlds, at least of all those who have had no opportunity to learn of that love in this life, and possibly even of many if not all, who have more or less distinctly rejected that love in time: Cox, *Salvator Mundi*; essay on Universal Redemption. When the proposition is not presented in this sweeping form, the obvious trend of thought is in this direction. The revealed love of God is set forth as furnishing at least probable foundation for the largest hope. Can that love, it is asked, suffer the infant, the pagan, or even the unenlightened and the debased in Gospel lands, to perish throughout eternity without the knowledge and the experience of saving grace?

Here again the necessity for faithful discrimination, and for faithful recognition of the facts in the case, forces itself upon the conscientious mind. Erroneous and mischievous inferences from the generic proposition that God is love, are unfortunately no novelty in the history of Christian theology. How often has this proposition been made the basis of deductions which are destructive to right views of other divine attributes—eminently the wisdom, the righteousness, and the just sovereignty of God! How frequently, from Pelagius down to Arminius, have men argued on this ground, more or less sweepingly, against the biblical doctrine respecting the moral corruption, the true guiltiness, and therefore the righteous condemnation of man! How often have Socinian and other kindred heresies respecting the need of the atonement, its nature and range and

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<sup>1</sup>Psalm 103. Isa. 55. Hosea 6. John 3: 16-7. Eph. 1: 10. Rom. 5 and 11.

issues, been maintained by a similar process! And how constantly do the current varieties of universalism, restorationism, and even annihilationism, appeal for their support to the truth of truths that God is love—it being, it is alleged, an act of tenderness even to blot out of existence those whom He can not restore to a state of love and holiness!

Against a process so fraught with perils, as the history of religious opinion bears solemn witness, it becomes us carefully to guard. Rejoicing in the doctrine that God is love, and believing that our only hope of salvation lies in His revealed and pledged grace, we are still bound to emphasize the obvious truth that this love is not a spontaneous, unregulated impulse, but a holy affection, dwelling within the breast of Deity in perfect harmony with wisdom and righteousness no less infinite and no less controlling. Perfect love is by its own nature a self-regulative and self-limiting virtue. It embraces the race as well as the individual soul, and can do nothing to favor the individual at the sacrifice of the super-eminent interests of the race. It contemplates eternity in every manifestation, and can in no case expend itself on temporal advantage at the sacrifice of eternal issues. The love of God is always a wise love, taking on no form and showing itself in no degree excepting such as unerring intelligence prescribes. The love of God is a just love, never revealing itself otherwise than absolute righteousness permits. And the demands of this wisdom and this equity run out quite beyond our range of vision—beyond our power of apprehension, so that we are in no degree capable of determining what wisdom and equity may in any case permit a loving Deity to do. We may know the fact that God loves, and may see that this love so far as manifested

is wise and righteous; but how can we know to what extent or in what manner God ought to love! Surely we are not competent to say what love should compel Him to do,—still less to arraign any of His acts on the ground that they seem to us to be inadequate manifestations of his love,—least of all, to prophesy as to the revelations of that love in other worlds, to disembodied spirits who have neglected to feel as they ought in view of his providences and his grace manifested to them while in the flesh.

It is freely admitted that trying and mysterious facts confront us at this point. If God so loved the world as to give His only Son for its salvation, and so loved the world through all the ages before as truly as after the advent of the Son, why was that advent so long delayed; and why were such uncounted millions suffered to die in sin during the long interim? If the grace of God is so comprehensive, so tender, so free, why has the progressive movement of Christianity in the earth been so slow—long centuries passing, and myriads passing into eternity with the ages, while the Gospel is laboriously making its way from land to land, from continent to continent? If God is so loving in his nature and purpose, and if he knows that salvation turns for every soul of man on the direct and conscious acceptance of Christ, why does He not this instant, even by miracle on miracle if need be, make the Gospel known throughout the earth? And, looking for a moment in the direction of providence rather than grace, how are we to explain the numberless pains, the wails of childhood, the agonies of life, the trials and wrongs and miseries of men, and all the shadows that sweep so heavily and pitilessly across our earthly sky, if God indeed be loving, merciful, infinite in compassion and in grace?

These questions are suggested in this connection simply for the light they shed on the doubtful and dangerous quality of much of the current reasoning as to the dealings of God with the impenitent dead, based on the generic doctrine that He is love. When the thoughtful mind begins to discern the insuperable difficulties that confront it in undertaking to explain in this connection either the providential or the gracious dealings of God with men in this world, surely it will not be blind to the unwisdom of making sweeping inferences from this truth in connection with another state of being. All the more cautious will such a mind become when it discovers that it has little or no basis for such specific inferences in the revealed Word. And will it not rather be inclined to learn a salutary lesson from the divine silence, and to be dumb in the presence of unrevealed mysteries, than to assert with dogmatic positiveness what the love of God will and must constrain Him to do in a condition of things of which it has and can have so little actual knowledge?

Like answer must be given to the kindred inclination of the advocates of salvation after death, to emphasize inordinately the obligations of justice, and to say that God ought to give every human being a chance somewhere to know Christ and be saved directly through Him.—Before all the declarations quoted from both the Old Testament and the New, in proof that God is just—just inherently and just in all His dealings with men, we reverently bow in humble and cordial faith. We believe and know that the Judge of all the earth will do right,—that His scepter is a scepter of righteousness, and His dominion one of perfect equity

**IV. Divine Justice  
and Future Salvation.**

toward every creature,—that in His dispensations of grace He is equitable in the highest possible measure, and that the Gospel itself is a revelation that justifies Him while it saves those who accept His grace.<sup>1</sup> As has just been urged, this principle of justice, having its ground in the very nature of Deity, not only rules supremely in all that God does, but controls His tenderest affections, subordinates to itself every impulse of love, renders all the divine acts righteous even before they reveal themselves to men as gracious. Such is the order of the divine attributes that, as wisdom precedes righteousness and conditions righteousness, so righteousness must ever precede and condition love. The divine attributes are never independent; they exist in a sacred and eternal relationship. As love never absorbs justice or sets wisdom aside, so justice never quenches love, or refuses to heed the dictates of wisdom. The only acts possible to such a being as God is, are such acts as a love eternally wise, eternally righteous, may demand.

On this general ground that God is and must ever be just, it is argued that He must and will give what is described as an opportunity to be saved, to all men inasmuch as He has given that opportunity to some; and further that, since He has not given such opportunity to all in this life, He is bound in equity to do this and therefore will do it in the intermediate state. But is it not obvious that these propositions can be sustained only on the general hypothesis, more or less consciously held by such advocates, that the plan of salvation is not merely a plan devised and executed in love, but also a plan demanded in some sense by justice itself? Is it not implied, if not stated, that the leaving of myriads of

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<sup>1</sup>Job 8: 3. 34: 12. Psalm 45: 6-7. Jer. 9: 24. Rom. 3: 26. I. John 1: 9. Rev. 15: 3-4.

mankind in that sinful and corrupt estate into which through the sin of our first parents they have fallen, is something which God can not righteously do? Is it not implied, if not stated, either that He is bound in equity to provide redemption for the race in its totality, or at least to do for each and all what He graciously consents to do for some? That such implications lie couchant in the theory of a probation after death, is only too apparent.

Martensen, for example, (*Christ. Dogm.*, § 285) urges that the divine character, as righteous no less than merciful, justifies the conclusion that God will sooner or later, as a matter of equity, provide universal restoration through the Gospel. Nitsch and Van Oosterzee prefer to rest the dogma on the attribute of love alone; at least they make no formal attempt to argue it on the ground of the divine justice. But Dorner (*Christ. Doct.*, § 130) maintains not merely that no one is condemned on account of his natural sin or guilt, but further that, if God should withhold from any one whatever is indispensable to his salvation, the condemnation of such a person would be on equitable grounds impossible. He also affirms (§ 153: iii) that the absoluteness of Christianity demands that no one shall be judged of God before Christianity has somewhere been made accessible—brought home to him personally. Maurice and Farrar, while arguing for a *post mortem* salvation mainly on the ground that the love of God must impel Him to provide such salvation, frequently appeal informally to our sense of what is due to righteousness,—suggesting, if not assuming, that God is too just to condemn men in the coming life who have never heard of Christ on earth. Among American advocates the position of Dorner is more positively affirmed,—especially on the ground

of the absoluteness and universality of Christianity. Since this religion is by its own nature absolute and universal, it is declared (*Progressive Orthodoxy*; Essay 1x) that it ought to be given after death to those who are deprived of its blessings in this life. And, in like manner, since it is right for God to judge the world by Jesus Christ, it is asserted that it must be wrong in Him to judge at death those who have never had the opportunity to embrace Christ here, or to judge any hereafter until they have had such opportunity.<sup>1</sup>

But, if it be difficult to determine just what love, in the broadest sense, may impel or may permit God to do toward the salvation of our race, it is a far more difficult task to decide upon what equity demands of Him in such a high and sovereign sphere of action. Within this sphere are we not often confronted by facts whose magnitude and awfulness might well constrain us to humility in any such undertaking! It is true, in a limited sense, that as has been claimed, the revelation of God in Christ enables us to understand in certain respects what is right for God to do or not to do. But that revelation does not tell us, for example, why God makes the immense distinctions as to spiritual privilege which we actually see existing among men on the earth,—why his great salvation is presented to our view amid such inexplicable complexities in experience, under such varied conditions, through such long and slow and painful processes,—why such myriads are suffered to live and to die, century after century, without hearing of this wonderfully gracious and wonderfully efficacious salvation. And in the presence of the awful problems which rise up before every thoughtful Christian mind as

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<sup>1</sup>See also Cox, *Salvator Mundi*, Essay VII. JUKES, *Restitution of All Things*, p. 106. MUNGER, *Freedom of Faith*, Introduction.

it contemplates this Gospel of Christ as exhibited in time, where the Scriptures shed at least some light upon what righteousness as well as love may impel God to do, how can such a mind venture to say what He ought to do, and therefore will do, with this Gospel in an intermediate state into whose darkness, so far as this problem is concerned, the divine Revelation sends hardly a single ray of light?

Reasonings of this sort may well be challenged. With any light now shed on the problem, it is impossible for any one to say that God ought to give all men the same chance to be saved which He is seen to be giving some; impossible to charge Him with injustice even though we see myriads of souls passing into eternity without being saved; impossible to arraign His equity, though no ground of hope should anywhere appear as to these millions, after they have passed beyond the confines of time. If we were able to affirm that God was bound in equity to provide a scheme of salvation for a race who had fallen into sin and misery without their own choice, under a constitution of things which He had established, and for whose defective or mischievous working He, rather than they, was responsible, then with good reason we might infer that such a God was bound to provide such a salvation for all, and to make such arrangements that even in this world, and if not in this world, then certainly somewhere in eternity, all should have the opportunity to be saved. But in that case it must with inexpressible pain be remembered that, were this dark supposition correct, we could have no warrant whatever that such a God as this supposition imagines to exist, would be led by any sense of justice to correct the awful wrong which He had done to mankind. On this hypothesis we could



only confess ourselves in the grasp of a Being whose power over us was limitless and resistless as fate, but of whose justice we could have neither in nature or in moral administration any comforting assurances whatever.

Turning from this sphere of inquiry to the Scriptures, we are at once confronted with the fundamental proposition that God was in no sense bound by equity to provide salvation for any among the sons of men, and that the salvation He offers has its origin and inspiration, not in an imperative of justice, but in the impulse of fatherly love. God so loved the world, is the universal declaration; herein is love, not that we first loved Him, but that He first loved us, and gave His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. The entire argument of Paul in the great epistle to the Roman Church (Ch. XI) is based on this proposition. But if the Gospel is a plan devised by grace alone, then it is no more a plan to be contrived and executed on the basis of equity; otherwise, grace is no more grace. If it be a plan originating in equity and required by equity, then grace has no true place in it, and the ascription of it to the divine love as its source is an error throughout. In other words, if mercy is something which is due to man from God, mercy is no longer mercy; and the gracious element which is everywhere in the New Testament presented as the central thing in our salvation, the sole ground of argument and appeal, and of conviction and condemnation also, disappears at once and forever. That such a conclusion is consciously admitted by the writers here quoted, ought not to be claimed; that the doctrine which they have enunciated, tends inevitably toward this conclusion can not well be questioned. And as little can it be ques-

tioned that such a conclusion, though it be asserted on the basis of the general doctrine of Scripture respecting God as a just and righteous as well as a loving Being, is in form and essence contrary to the teaching of Scripture respecting grace, and especially to the entire biblical presentation of the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

In connection with these generalizations respecting the universal relations of Christ and Christianity, and respecting the mercy and the justice of God as concerned with an univer-

V. Work of the Spirit, Temporal Only.

sal scheme of redemption, may be named another,—that which is based on the alleged universality of the Spirit in His salvatory work.—The assertion of such universality is indeed a necessary element in the doctrine of universal probation, unless the Pelagian position be accepted, that the work of the Spirit though desirable is not indispensable to human salvation. Hence all those passages of Holy Writ which describe the Spirit in the greatest breadth and sweep of his influence, are in this connection summoned into court to testify to the universality of the method and operation of grace. The promise of Joel that the Spirit should be poured out upon all flesh, with other like intimations in the prophetic books—the declaration of our Lord that the Spirit is free and broad and potent as the winds in His saving ministries, and that He has come to convince not some men, but the world, of sin and righteousness and judgment—the cosmic event of Pentecost and the subsequent verifications of ancient prophecy in the career of the apostolic Church, and the large assurances of the Pauline epistles,<sup>1</sup> are all intro-

<sup>1</sup> Joel 2 : 28-32. Isa. 44 : 3-5. John 3 : 6-8, 16 : 7-13. Acts 2 : Rom. 15 : 19. 1 Cor. 2.

duced here to prove that, as Christianity is an universal religion, the work of the Spirit must be an universal work. It is said, in general, that the agency and the motive must be no less wide than the plan of redemption itself; that the Spirit must therefore be working under Christianity broadly in human nature and in human society; and that this generic work has its appropriate and essential condition in the mutual relations existing between God and man as man. And another writer affirms that the Spirit broods over the world of humanity, as at first over the world of chaos; that humanity as such is thus charged with redemptive forces wrought into the soul of man, and into all the institutions and relations of men in life: and that every human being will receive from the Spirit of God all the influence impelling to salvation that his nature can endure and yet retain its moral integrity.<sup>1</sup>

According to this sweeping conception of the range and character of the work wrought by the Spirit in connection with the Gospel, it must follow that wherever the Gospel goes, the Spirit must and will go also, with convicting if not regenerating power,—the entire success of the divine scheme of mercy depending wholly on this superadded agency. Must it not follow also that, as the Gospel is not offered to all men in this life, and must therefore on grounds of both love and equity be offered hereafter to all who have not heard the salutary offer here, the Spirit must be at work in the intermediate state as truly and powerfully as He ever works in this world; so that there may and shall be Pentecosts and revivals, convictions and conversions and outpourings of grace, in Hades as truly as on

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<sup>1</sup> PROGRESSIVE ORTHODOXY, Essay v-vi. MUNGER, *Freedom of Faith*; The New Theology.

earth? Further: if it be admitted, (*Prog. Orth.*, p. 76) that in the nature of the case, this present life is the most acceptable time, the most favorable opportunity for moral renewal in Christ, then must it not follow still further, either that the operations of the Spirit will be correspondingly more powerful in the intermediate state than they are here, or that, as they so often fail in this life, they must still more often, more disastrously, fail in that less favorable condition?

It might be argued that, if the Spirit is thus at work among the myriads of disembodied souls in the eternal world, all the other remedial agencies associated with the Spirit in saving men in this life, must also be carried over, without impairing their efficiency, into that state of being,—either this, or that these must be supplanted there by other agencies as powerful or perchance far more powerful in their contribution to the same result. As the Spirit works here mainly, if not exclusively, in and through saving truth, by and with the ministry of the Word, in conjunction with sabbaths and sacraments, and through solemn and tender providences designed to impress the soul with a deeper sense of its condition and its need, so we might reasonably infer that He will work there through either these or other like instrumentalities, as well as by regenerative energy within the soul itself. To say that all questions of mode or instrument are out of the range of rational inquiry is hardly admissible in such a case as this; those who affirm so confidently the presence of a saving Christ, of the Gospel of mercy, of a renewing Spirit visible and powerful unto salvation within that intermediate state, can not well set such questions aside.

But waiving these queries, and contemplating the Holy Spirit alone, we are confronted by this decisive

fact, that nowhere in the Bible is there a verse, a line, a phrase, which teaches that the Spirit has any mission or office or agency which reaches beyond the boundaries of time. If Christ descended into the under world, and there in a few hours set up as He had done here, the wonderful economy of redemption, we find not even so obscure an intimation as that of 1 Peter 3: 18, to suggest that the Holy Ghost followed him there and wrought with Him in the restoration of the spirits in prison. On the other hand, every thing that the Spirit has condescended to tell us respecting Himself and his mission, points to that mission as exclusively a thing of earth and time. The second birth is an experience which He produces, not in human nature, but in individual souls; conversion as He describes it is a visible experience realized amid human scenes and conditions; prayer as inspired and guided by Him is an earthly utterance; the Christian graces and virtues bloom at his touch on this earthly soil. His work is said to complete itself in the article of death, as in the case of believers made perfect in holiness and passing into glory, or of infants transformed into the divine image by his energy in the dying hour. He Himself tells us absolutely nothing of any work which He is to do in any other world than this; and the more carefully we study His declarations as embodied in the inspired Word, the less can we by any possibility admit the grotesque opposite conception.

It should indeed be more widely and ardently emphasized, that the Holy Spirit is a Spirit of love as well as of power, and that as such we have the broadest basis for hope that He will work his mighty works wherever the Gospel goes, even to the ends of the earth. We have no right to prescribe geographic limits to his

mission, as if that mission were to be wrought out only within the territorial domain of Christendom. We may rather believe that wherever the missionary of the Cross goes, this divine agency in far outspreading mercy goes before Him;—we may believe that it is one of His functions to prepare the whole world for the Gospel, and so to affect the hearts of men even on pagan shores, that they shall be ready to hear and welcome the glad tidings of redemption. What we read of his gracious workings far and wide in the apostolic age, in Cesarea, in Antioch, in Damascus, in Corinth, in Athens and Rome, justifies the broadest hope as to the extent and sweep of his influence in later times, not merely where the Gospel has been formally proclaimed, but far beyond such limits. But we are everywhere confronted by the mysterious fact that, on the other hand, He is sovereign as well as gracious; that His work is not wrought by human command, or in response to human choice; that, like the wind, He goeth where He listeth, and no man can determine His coming or His departure. The same sovereignty which is exhibited by the Father and by the Son in the provision and application of redemption, appears in Him also. Sweeping generalizations therefore as to what He ought to do, or will do, based on no distinct word of Scripture and contradicting the plain facts and lessons of Christian experience, are wholly inadmissible here. They can lead only to illusive conceptions of His work even in this life; and if projected beyond the visible boundaries of time, they can only become all the more illusive—all the more dangerous to the faith and the hopes of men.

Another instance of like error may be seen in the general view held by the advocates of the dogma under

consideration, respecting sin on one hand, and final condemnation on the other.—Reference has already been

**VI. False Conceptions of Sin and Condemnation.**

made to the opinion, more or less fully avowed, that the only sin which justifies divine judgment is the sin of unbelief, with the consequent implication that this is the only charge which will be introduced into that solemn court, and the only ground of final condemnation. Some further examination of these affirmations, in their more generic form, is needful here, in view of their close connection with the erroneous generalizations already considered. If Christ be the head of humanity, and Christianity the universal religion in the unlimited sense here advocated, and if the divine love and the divine justice alike require that every human soul should know of Christ and should choose Him or reject Him either here or hereafter, then it certainly follows as is alleged, that all other sins of men afford no sufficient ground of condemnation, and that the only proper judgment upon mankind is that which is described as a Christian judgment. In other words, that final adjudication will and must in every case turn absolutely on the specific question whether each soul has distinctly and sufficiently heard of Christ, and has voluntarily accepted or rejected Him as the offered Savior. Men will never be condemned, it is implied, until they are condemned on this ground.

But what in fact is the biblical doctrine as to the sinfulness and guilt of the race, even where such knowledge of Christ has never been received? Apart from all theological technics in phrase or teaching, can there be any doubt among evangelical minds that sin, introduced through our first parents, has actually reached and infected the race as a race,—that its corruption has seized

upon every soul of man, and is manifest in all, even from the first moment of moral action,—that, back of all such action, there is that in human nature universally which is unholy rather than holy, and which in some true and deep sense of the term makes that nature, as well as the acts that spring from it, sinful in the sight and estimate of a holy God? We hardly need to resort to the Bible for proofs of this universal fact, though every page of Scripture contains some suggestion or illustration of the dreadful reality; all history, all experience, all consciousness trained and untrained, verifies the statement in ten thousand ways. Nor need we ask whether our humanity will or can cleanse itself, by any spontaneous processes, from this universal corruption of the moral nature, or set itself back into an estate of holiness; the confession of the race turns that hope into ashes. Whether some better language than that of current theology can or can not be found to describe this moral depravation, this sinful helplessness of the race, the solemn fact remains, as unquestionable as Scripture—as fixed and certain a thing as life itself.

Neither can it be questioned that God views the race as universally and immediately guilty, if not in virtue of this corrupted nature alone, still in view of its invariable disposition and movement toward sin, from the first hour of moral consciousness. It is true that some of the class of writers here referred to openly or by implication deny this proposition; not only Augustinianism, but the general doctrine of moral guiltiness incorporated in all evangelical creeds, is regarded by them as a dogma unwarranted by Scripture, and derogatory to human nature. By others the point of guilt is the rather ignored or treated as secondary, while the fact of sinfulness or depravity is admitted and empha-



sized. It is alleged, for example (*Prog. Orth.*, p. 291), that the consideration of sin is much more important than that of guilt,—that God alone knows how guilty any man may be, and that our knowledge is not sufficient to show us what judgment, if any, should be passed upon man as man, apart from his direct and voluntary treatment of the scheme of salvation. But such intimations even in this milder form can only mislead us; directly or indirectly they tend to loosen our conviction, based on multiplied declarations of Scripture, that God counts all men guilty even from birth, and therefore holds all, even the ignorant and the savage, already under just and awful condemnation.<sup>1</sup> The solemn fact everywhere forces itself upon us, not only in the Bible, but hardly less in human conscience and experience, that the race is not only sinful but condemned—condemned for the moral nature and dispositions as well as for the wrong acts of this life. Further, that God is wise and just in such condemnation of the race as sinful, must be admitted, however awful the fact may seem, by every one who is loyal to the divine Word. The Bible again and again affirms that it is not simply because mankind are sinful, that Christ has come to save them; but also because they are guilty and condemned already, and as such are in need of pardon and justification as well as spiritual cleansing and healing.

There is some truth in the statement that Protestantism, especially Calvinism, has concerned itself too much relatively with the relations and efficiency of the atonement in the matter of our justification merely. But there is great error in the opposite allegation, that the atonement is a scheme designed for the purpose of moral im-

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<sup>1</sup>Rom. 5: 12-19; the crucial and decisive text.

pression and influence only—a divine medication for a sick soul, rather than a redemption provided for a soul in captivity under the law. That Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and for our sins viewed not merely as accidents or misfortunes or diseases, but still more as offences against law, and as offences requiring some species of satisfaction or expiation to the law and the government of a righteous God, is a fundamental truth in the Christian scheme. That salvation as exhibited in Him includes deliverance from guilt as well as restoration in character, freedom from the curse and condemnation of the law as well as freedom from the bondage imposed by an unholy nature and a sinful disposition, is a truth no less fundamental. Indeed, the entire mediatorial work of our Lord,—His prophetic and kingly hardly less than His priestly function and ministry—proceeds on this basis. Nor is there any real necessity for the questioning of propositions so fundamental in order to emphasize either the interior weakness, disorder, moral obscuration and infirmity of human nature, or the amazing power of the Cross, when contemplated as a revelation of love—a revelation designed to awaken and quicken and inspire, as no other disclosure of God could do, the depravated soul of man. The fact that an atonement was needful to placate law, to sustain government, to satisfy divine justice, as well as to reveal love, must stand as long as Christianity stands.

If these biblical representations of the moral state of man as man be correct,—if the race are in any true sense by nature universally sinful, and therefore sinful in action, and on account of such sinfulness are already under condemnation, what becomes of the opinion that no human soul will be, or even can be, equitably condemned until it has first passed through the process of

seeing Christ and deciding on His claim as a Savior, and has thus been prepared for what is characterized as a Christian judgment? Some opponents of this opinion have gone so far as to reject altogether the idea of a personal probation provided for man as a sinner,—maintaining that the first and only probation granted to the race was that experienced in Adam, and that in the divine plan of things there is no such subsequent experience or testing for each and every man as the term, probation, implies. The fact rather is that, though under differing conditions and with prospect far less hopeful, every human soul, on attaining moral consciousness, passes again for itself through the temptation of Eden,—is subjected as our first parents were, to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; and, like them, surrenders itself voluntarily to the seductions of sin, and falls away like them into voluntary transgression of the primal law of duty. The temptation of our Lord is as truly typical of an experience common to man, as was the original temptation of Adam and Eve in Paradise: the second event was intended as truly as the first to indicate that solemn law of moral testing, of choice between God and Satan, between duty and selfishness, under which every moral being exists, and from the nature of the case must ever exist, in such a world as this.<sup>1</sup>

But, granting the fact that life is to every conscious soul a state of probation, we are by no means driven to the Pelagian position that every such soul enters on this moral experience without sinful bias, without antecedent corruption of the nature disabling it morally from the successful prosecution of such experience to

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 3: Matt. 4. Also, I. John 2: 16. James 1: 13-15. I. Cor. 10: 13. Matt. 6: 13: and others.

its ideal consummation in a state of matured spiritual perfection. Neither are we driven to the position that the only form which such probation can assume is the Christian form, and the only outcome therefore must be what is called a Christian judgment and condemnation. As we shall have occasion to see hereafter in another connection, probation is a much broader experience than this proposition assumes it to be, and for like reason the terms, judgment and condemnation, are correspondingly much more comprehensive in their sweep. There is, in a word, a true probation for the heathen as really as for those who live under the light of Christianity; and there is therefore for the heathen a righteous judgment and a proper condemnation for every wrong deed done in this probationary condition,—though these differ in some vital features, as we shall yet see, from the judgment and the condemnation visited upon such as consciously reject Christ and His salvation.

Such are the principal generalizations, summoned from what is styled the higher plane of Scripture or of Christianity, and brought into court

as evidences of the dogma here controverted.—Critical examination of these evidences will readily bring into view

**VII. Concluding View of the Scripture Testimony.**

some at least of the illicit processes of reasoning which they involve, and which render them wholly inadequate as proofs on such an issue. One of these is an unlawful expansion of divine truth—a process through which what at first is seen as a revealed doctrine of the Scripture, properly embraced within the Christian scheme of belief, is carried by degrees out far beyond the point where the Bible places it, and is gradually broadened

and etherealized until it becomes at last an abstract philosophical proposition, containing not only much more than the Bible actually reveals, but more even than can possibly be substantiated by any methods available to the human mind. Another may be described as an unlawful contraction or limitation of divine truth,—that which is given in the Bible in comprehensive form, multiplex in its relations and many-sided as the diamond in its flashing radiance, being seized and held by the mind in some single aspect or relation only, without considerate regard to its other connections and adjustments. Still another is the attempt to determine hypothetically from the inadequate data given in Scripture or in human experience, what God ought to do, and what therefore He will and must do, in circumstances and conditions concerning which we have and can have little if any specific knowledge. And another, more deleterious still in its effect upon both thought and belief, is the exaltation of certain speculative tests or standards, drawn sometimes from the sphere of philosophy, and sometimes from the sphere of sentiment merely, by which it is assumed that the verities of our holy faith may legitimately be measured, and their validity or invalidity be established.

Christian Doctrine resolutely refuses to be dealt with by such methods, or to submit to conclusions thus obtained. What is termed the higher plane of Christianity, so far as it implies any such contemplation of divine things without careful regard to the limitations which the Word of God and the nature of the Christian religion as a thing of earth and time, primarily impose upon us, is not an improvement in method, but is rather an illusive and dangerous process throughout. The fundamental fact in the case is that the sacred

verities of our faith are to be received and held by us exactly as the Bible reveals them,—in their limitations as well as in their sweep,—in their adjustments to each other and to the entire system, no less than in their separate form as independent revelations,—as found in particular texts, plain propositions, direct and specific affirmations of the Holy Ghost, rather than in speculative deductions or inferential generalizations having only some incidental warrant in the Scripture. Any and every departure from this fundamental law is fraught with peril, alike to belief and to experience. And most sedulously are we to guard ourselves as Christian men against all illicit transmutation of the holy doctrines of grace, by whatever process, into merely speculative or rationalistic dogmas from which the divine authority has been largely exhaled, and which have therefore little power either to educate or to nourish biblical faith.

The error of attempting to establish by special interpretation of a few obscure passages, a sweeping proposition which is clearly unwarranted by the general and consentaneous teaching of the Bible as a whole, has already been sufficiently noted. But is it not an error still more dangerous to attempt, from such merely generic glimpses of Scripture as we have been contemplating, such rangy and cosmic glances at the Divine Word or at the Christian system in its totality, to establish a conclusion which in effect carries us out far beyond the boundaries of Scripture, and finds its final justification rather in what the comprehending reason seems to demand? It is no railing accusation to say that this is in substance what is attempted, consciously or unconsciously, in the propositions here controverted respecting the headship of Christ as the universal man, and the consequent universality of His religion—respecting

the love and the justice of God in their relations to the Gospel of grace, and the ministrations of the Spirit in connection with that Gospel—and respecting the proper sinfulness and guilt and consequent condemnation of the race, whether enlightened or unenlightened by the Inspired Word. In each case what is a fundamental and solemn truth of Scripture is, by a familiar rationalizing process, quietly transmuted into a speculative abstraction, a theoretic generalization, quite void either of biblical authoritativeness or of spiritual worth.

What is our duty with respect to dogmas and issues such as these? Are we not bound as Christian men, whatever may be our theory of inspiration, to hold that the Holy Spirit was always a factor and always the supreme factor in Holy Writ, and that as such He is our sole and supreme Teacher touching these solemn problems of the future,—a Teacher whose words are to be accepted just as He utters them, and by whose lessons our thinking on such problems is to be faithfully regulated, shaped, determined once and forever? And approaching the question here at issue in this spirit of unquestioning loyalty to the Word, and to the entire Word, and to that Word just as it stands, to what other conclusion can we come than that the dogma of Salvation after Death, in whatever form, is something which the Bible in no clear way directly suggests, and with which its general as well as particular teaching, its plain and harmonious and uniform testimony, studied by the eye of simple faith, is in irreconcilable conflict?

## CHAPTER IV.

### *THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN SYMBOLISM.*

A BRIEF consideration of the dogma under discussion, in the light of Christian Symbolism, may fitly follow the preceding inquiry into the teachings of Scripture. Such an examination will not fail to furnish practical evidence that this dogma, as it is without adequate warrant in the Word of God, is also without indorsement in the historic creeds and confessions of Christendom. In view of the claim that the dogma in question is not only orthodox—in harmony with the main movements and forms of existing Christian belief—but also is an advance along these lines, and a progressive improvement upon such established forms of faith, this line of inquiry assumes a special importance.

The nature of the evidence here to be introduced should be carefully defined.—All creeds are to be regarded simply as human declarations, framed to describe what the Church has come to regard and believe as the substance of the common Gospel. Such creeds may have been wrought into shape during the primitive ages, under the limitations imposed by imperfect knowledge or undeveloped experience, or amid the din of rivalries in sect or party, or perchance in times of conflict around specific doctrines of grace,—when unfavorable conditions of many sorts were affecting disastrously alike the truth involved and the form and color of its con-

**I. Nature of  
Symbolic Testi-  
mony.**



fessional exposition. They may also vary widely in degree of fullness, in calmness and equipoise of statement, in scripturalness and in spiritual tone, and therefore in authority. And he who summons such authority to his aid is therefore bound to consider well every element involved,—the circumstances and historic relations of each symbol, the exact meaning of each term and phrase, the aim and purpose of the entire structure, and the proper significance of the whole when viewed in relation to the developing thoughts and beliefs of other lands and other times.

But while all church confessions are thus human and limited in their range of application, it must also be conceded that a large divine element enters into the composition of every Christian creed. Protestantism indeed rejects on just grounds the presumptuous *Placuit Spiritui Sancto et Nobis* with which the Church of Rome indorses its official declarations,—holding rather to the judgment of the divines of Westminster that, since apostolic times, many synods and councils have erred, and all may err, and none therefore may be made our final rule of faith or practice. Protestantism also rejects the dogma underlying this Roman Catholic assumption, to the effect that the Holy Spirit so dwells within the Church, directing the currents of its progressing experience, and controlling the consequent development of its views and beliefs concerning divine things, as to give to such views and beliefs, traditionally preserved, a supernatural quality and an authoritativeness coëqual with that of the Written Word itself. Yet in setting aside these unwarranted presumptions, an intelligent Protestantism is not blind to the blessed fact that the Spirit of God is with His people in all

ages for their education and spiritual nurture; and that consequently the established convictions of the Church, though they be neither inspired nor infallible, are entitled to a very high place in the esteem of every believer. Whatever doctrine or opinion is found to be in harmony with these churchly convictions, certainly has strong presumption in its favor: whatever is unsupported by church symbols, or is clearly contrary to them, is presumably a heresy or an error.

It is important also, in this connection, to draw a broad line of distinction between such evidences for or against any given opinion, and any confirmation derived from patristic teaching merely. Farrar, in his historic sketch of eschatological opinion (*Eternal Hope: Appendix*), endeavors, though with but scant success, to sustain his universalistic position by testimonies quoted from the writings of the Christian Fathers. But the manner in which he presents this evidence, suggests his own underlying sense of its insufficiency. He refers, for example, to certain passages in Justin Martyr and Irenæus, which seem to him to imply either the ultimate redemption or the total destruction of sinners; and regards it by no means clear that these passages may not teach what he supports as the truth. Admitting that Clemens of Alexandria does not express himself with perfect distinctness, he yet asserts that, judging by the drift of his language, Clemens could not have held any other doctrine than that of an ultimate restoration of humanity. He discovers what he describes as slight traces of this doctrine in Diodorus of Tarsus, in Didymus of Alexandria, and in Gregory Nazianzen: and from certain phrases used by the latter, infers that he leaves the whole matter an open question. Gregory

of Nyssa is described as saying what may be interpreted as showing the permissibility of this opinion in his age and region; and Athanasius is said to allude with only an oblique and kindly disapproval to the teaching of Origen respecting the restitution of all things. He points also to the silence of the Ecumenical Councils as sufficient evidence that the universalism of Origen was not condemned by the Church. In fact, his only important witness drafted from the whole circle of patristic authorities is Origen himself. He frankly admits that Jerome, though advocating a future purgation for imperfect believers, was vehemently opposed to the Origenic universalism, and that Augustine, chief theologian of the ancient Church, was no less decisive, though somewhat less fierce, in his opposition.

But what error has ever appeared,—what heresy has ever arisen in the later ages of Christianity, which can not be more or less sustained, by some such process as this, from the teachings of the Fathers of the first four or five centuries? It might justly be claimed in reply, that the utterances of a single teacher, or of a small group, are not to be taken as the concurrent voice of the ancient Church,—that the argument from implication, from possible interpretation, from mere silence, is at best a frail support,—that the indifference or the friendly reference or mild opposition of other teachers, who are on record as rejecting the dogma, can not properly be construed into proof that the dogma itself was extensively current, or was regarded with indulgence by the Church. It might further be claimed on good grounds, that the large majority of the Fathers were positively opposed to the universalism of Origen, and to all associated phases of error; and that in fact the argument from tradition, strongly pressed, would be

found to weigh heavily in the opposite scale.<sup>1</sup> But we may rather, in a word, question the intrinsic value of the patristic argument throughout, and ask for some stronger form of confirmatory evidence, if such evidence can be adduced.

Accepting as of far greater value the organized and permanent testimonies of the Church itself, we may now inquire briefly respecting the teachings of the ancient creeds of Christendom on the dogma under discussion.—Far-  
 rar affirms broadly that restorationism, at least in the form advanced by Origen and other Fathers, has never been condemned by any decree of the universal Church, and claims that the Church has been wisely silent while mutually irreconcilable opinions have been held by her teachers without rebuke. Plumptre<sup>2</sup> more cautiously

II. Testimony  
of the ancient  
Creeds.

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<sup>1</sup>The narrow basis of the claim urged by Canon Farrar is made manifest with almost painful thoroughness, by Prof. Pusey in his volume already referred to, in reply to the *Eternal Hope*, entitled, *What is of Faith as to Everlasting Punishment*. In an appendix, he shows that Origen, the one conspicuous representative of restitution, varied widely in his own opinions and doctrine—that he was opposed as heretical on this point by nearly every prominent teacher of his time,—that he was condemned, though informally, by the fifth General Council, held at Constantinople, A. D. 553. In another appendix, the author gives a list of 84 among the Fathers, from the age of Polycarp and Ignatius down to John of Damascus, who are witnesses, not merely to their own personal belief, but to the accepted doctrine of the Church, during the first seven Christian centuries. In this list are found the names of Justin Martyr, Tertullian and Cyprian; Athanasius, Eusebius and Hilary; Basil and Gregory Nazianzen and Ambrose; Jerome, Chrysostom and Augustine. In the presence of such an array, the large claim of Farrar dwindles into very small dimensions.

<sup>2</sup>*Spirits in Prison*; App. iv, on the Eschatology of the Early Church.

limits the denial to the fourth and fifth centuries, and holds that no council of this period definitely condemned the Origenic theory of restitution. Still he admits that the Fifth General Council classes Origen with Arius, Nestorius, Apollinaris and Eutyches, as an errorist worthy of reprobation, though without specifying the error which called forth its anathema. He also admits that the Trullan Council, held at Constantinople, A. D. 691, formally condemned Origen among others as belonging to that class of teachers who invent changes for our souls and bodies, and impiously utter drunken ravings as to the future life of the dead.

Recurring to the first of the three ecumenical creeds, we are justified in asking if the articles of belief briefly stated in its closing sentence do not, in their meaning and order and relations to one another, shed some suggestive light on the question whether the Church of the second and third centuries believed in a Gospel after death. The gift of the Holy Ghost, the organization of the Holy Catholic Church, and the Communion of Saints, as there affirmed, are events occurring in time and on earth. Is it not clear that the Forgiveness of Sins was in like manner contemplated as an experience occurring on earth and in time? Would it not be a wholly unwarrantable assumption that the primitive Church regarded such forgiveness, so often expressed in the sacrament of baptism, as a divine process stretching on through the intermediate state, until the period of the resurrection of the dead, and the commencement of that life everlasting in which soul and body are to be joined together forever? Interpreting the phrase, the forgiveness of sins, as embodying the essence of Christian experience and life, surely we can reach no other conclusion than that such experience was as simply and

truly held by the early believers to be an earthly and temporal event, as the descent of the Spirit or the incarnation and intercession of our Lord.<sup>1</sup>

The creed of Nicæa, as amended at Constantinople, A. D. 381, directly associates this divine forgiveness as the representative experience of religion, with the sacrament of baptism, and with the Church as the household of faith: I believe one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church: I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. Here, as in several other creeds of the period, the intermediate article on the Communion of Saints is omitted, and the forgiveness is connected directly with the Church and her sacraments. In the creed of Cyril, of Jerusalem, A. D. 350, the order of the articles is reversed; and the sacrament, which is described as the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins, is placed before the article on the holy Catholic Church. In the creed of Cyprian, a century earlier, the article on the Church is abbreviated, and the *Remissionem Peccatorum* is carried back still more directly to its divine source *per sanctam ecclesiam* in the Holy Ghost, the author and giver of all spiritual life. These references strongly confirm the conclusion derived from the fonal creed already considered; they make the forgiveness as truly an event of earth and of time as the baptism which seals it, or the holy Church which is the earthly home of repentant souls. Any other interpretation would constrain us to regard the Holy Ghost, the Catholic

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<sup>1</sup> PEARSON on the Creed, Art. x; *Forgiveness of Sins*; also Art. XII; *The Life Everlasting*. "The favor of God is not to be obtained where there is no means left to obtain it. \* \* \* As the tree falleth, so it lieth; there is no change to be wrought in man within those flames, no purgation of his sins, no sanctification of his nature, no justification of his person, and therefore no salvation of him."

Church, the Communion of Saints, and Baptism and its correlate sacrament as also extending into the intermediate state, no less truly than the forgiveness with which they are thus vitally associated. That the Church of the fourth century, as represented at Nicæa and Constantinople, held any such belief, will not be claimed, by one who justly estimates these successive propositions in their organic relationship. And this view is strongly confirmed by the antecedent declaration of the Nicene Creed, that for us men and for our salvation, Christ came down from heaven,—a mediatorial transaction not only to be begun on earth, but also by clear implication to be wrought out and completed in time and among men.

The specific aim of the Athanasian Creed, (*Symbolum Quicunque*) sufficiently explains the fact that this symbol contains no reference to the Church and her communion and sacraments, or to the forgiveness of sins as the representative experience of believers. Had the question respecting the restitution of all things been as prominent as the question of the Trinity or of the person of the Messiah, or had any considerable portion of the Church accepted the mischievous teaching of Origen and his school, we might perchance have looked for some such reference. The Athanasian Creed however, like the symbol of Chalcedon, A. D. 451, simply repeats the suggestive phrase of the preceding creed: for us and for our salvation. It goes on at once, after setting forth the resurrection and ascension of Christ, to affirm the general doctrine of the resurrection and the judgment; and then adds the conclusive declaration: They that have done good shall go into life everlasting, and they that have done evil into everlasting fire. That the *vitam aeternam* and the *ignem aeternum* in this clause

signify the same kind of duration, and this an endless duration, can not be questioned; that there is no restitution or salvation after the judgment, is unequivocally affirmed. And certainly the connection of the clause with what has preceded it, leaves little ground for the opinion that either the author of this symbol, or those who received it, believed in the theory of a moral restoration between death and the judgment—of a Gospel to be preached, accepted, glorified in the intermediate state.

In view of all these testimonies, derived from the symbolism of the first six centuries, the broad claim of Farrar, or even the more cautious and limited claim of Plumptre, must be taken with large abatement. Though neither of these eminent advocates claims any positive confessional support of the views which they respectively represent, both lay great stress on the argument *e silentio*, and assume that their views were not only considerably current in the earlier ages, but were regarded by the Church at large either with indifference, or at the worst with mild disapproval. Yet the significant fact is, that no form of the dogma of salvation after death, whether during the intermediate state or subsequent to the judgment, whether universal or partial, ever found the slightest indorsement in any symbol of ancient Christianity. The significant fact is, as these brief glances show, that directly and indirectly, by affirmation or by implication, this dogma was the rather distinctly excluded from that Catholic Faith which, except a man believe *fideliter firmiterque*, he can not, according to these creeds, be saved.

Passing over the long creedless period between the sixth and the sixteenth century, and studying the con-



**III. Testimonies of Roman Catholic and Oriental Symbolism.**

fessions of the Reformation, Roman and Greek and Protestant, we shall be led to very similar conclusions.—And here we may first consider the symbolic teaching of the Church of Rome and of Greek Christianity :

The dogma of Purgatory, as defined by the Roman Catholic communion (Conc. Trid.: Sess. 6, Can. 30: Sess. 22, Cap. 2: Sess. 25:) makes provision simply for baptized church members who die in a state of relative imperfection, and upon whom further disciplinary processes are supposed to be requisite in order to their spiritual preparation for the holiness and the felicities of heaven. Associated with this, as already stated, is its conception of a *limbus infantum* for unbaptized children—a place not of punishment, but of spiritual renovation, where the original corruption of their natures may be cleansed away, and where they may be made ready for the heavenly state,—the *levissima damnatio* of Augustine. And to this is allied the *limbus patrum*, (Cat. Rom. 1: 6) where the patriarchs and saints who lived before the advent, are gathered together as in waiting for the full manifestation of the Lord, and for their complete salvation through Him. But beyond these provisions for the three classes named, the Church of Rome has never gone: the dogma of an offer of Christ to all the dead—all who have never had such offer in this life, finds in her symbolism no warrant whatsoever. It is indeed to her theologians rather than her creeds (especially Bellarmine, *De Purgat.*) that we look for the justification of these two supplementary beliefs respecting the estate of unbaptized children, and of the pious dead antecedent to the Gospel. Beyond these reservations *Anathema cunctis hereticis*, and by consequence condemnation in a form more or less positive to

the entire pagan world, is the decree of her Councils, from the days of Trent until now.<sup>1</sup>

Nor does the Church of Rome furnish any warrant whatever for the belief in an ultimate restitution of humanity, such as Origen and Gregory of Nyssa affirmed. Its dogma of purgatory, originating distinctively in the seventh century, sprang from the necessity for some interpretation of the intermediate state, and from the impression that many of its membership, dying amid remaining imperfections, must be largely unprepared at death for that perfect heaven whither apostles and martyrs and eminent saints had directly ascended. But for the multitudes who died in sin and out of the communion of the Church, nothing remained but hell—immediate, awful, everlasting. Variations in grade and degree of punishment are recognized, as in the phrase of Aquinas: *Uno modo per se, alio modo per accidens*, *Quest.* 98: *Art.* 2. Various explanations, more or less sensuous, of the nature of this future punishment, are also recognized by Catholic authorities: Hagenbach, *Hist. Doct.*, § 209. But the teaching of Scotus Erigena, quoted by Farrar, in favor of the ultimate universality of redemption—*mirabilis atque ineffabilis reversio*—has never gained currency or even recognition within the Church. The awful line of Dante (*Div. Comm.*, Canto III: v. 9) expresses not merely the theologic position of the fourteenth century, but also the invariable testimony of Rome in all later times:

Leave Hope Behind, All Ye Who Enter Here!

The dogmatic testimony of the Greek communion is

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<sup>1</sup> MOEILLER, *Symbolism*, p. 22. "Fallen man as such is able, in no otherwise save by the teaching of divine revelation, to attain to the true and pure knowledge of his fallen condition," &c.

even less favorable to such teaching. In the Orthodox Confession of the Catholic and Apostolic Eastern Church, A. D. 1643, the ancient Creeds are (*Quest. 2*) solemnly reëffirmed, with all their implications against this dogma: and in the same symbol (*Quest. 66*) even the Roman doctrine of Purgatory is directly rejected. It is true that in the Florentine terms of reunion proposed between the Eastern Church and the Western, A. D. 1439, this doctrine was recognized, in the single feature of prayers and masses for the dead, as an allowable article of belief. In the Longer Catechism of the Russian Church, A. D. 1839, a like doctrine is also taught (*Quest. 376*) in the declaration that such souls as have departed in faith, but without having had time to bring forth fruits worthy of repentance, may be aided towards the attainment of a blessed resurrection by prayers offered in their behalf, especially such as are offered in union with the oblation of the bloodless sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ. But the Greek communion makes no dogmatic provision even for unbaptized infants: it even formally declares that there is no possibility of salvation outside of the Church. It pronounces all men sinful by nature as well as act, declares all impenitent sinners by the invisible judgment of God cut off from His Church, and consigns them immediately (*Quest. 383*) to everlasting death—that is, to everlasting fire, to everlasting torment, with the devils. No trace of restitution, whether before the judgment or after, whether relating to the whole or to any part of mankind beyond the pale of the Church, anywhere appears.

What thus finds no recognition in the creeds of Rome or Constantinople, gains no incidental indorsement from any representative theologian of either communion, from the age of Scotus Erigena down to our own time. With

all the latitude of opinion which the Roman Church especially allows on points not absolutely concluded by her formal decisions, no conspicuous teacher within her fold has ever been an open advocate of restorationism in whatever form; no council or pope has ever found it necessary to issue an official dictum against it as a current speculation. The quotations adduced by Farrar and Plumptre are derived wholly from the first five centuries; the former indeed claims that we owe to the Middle Ages, and to the Scholastic Theology, the existing dogma as to the endlessness of doom, and its irreversibility after death. But in this particular the medieval and the modern Church has done nothing more than carry out into positive form what was in fact the belief of the ancient Church also. The opinion that the dogma of Purgatory was invented to meet a demand of the religious nature which could not otherwise be satisfied, is one to which the history of Christian doctrine furnishes hardly a trace of proof.

But evidence more decisive confronts us, as we turn from Roman and Oriental teaching into the broader field of Protestant belief, to examine specifically the standard confessions of the Reformation.—Here again we may carry with us all the force of the ancient creeds already considered, since Protestantism formally, again and again, declared its full adherence to these earlier symbols, with all their implications. But in addition to such inferences, we shall find in these confessions abundant evidence—as Plumptre admits, while attributing the fact to what he calls the dark shadow of Augustine—that no trace of Origenism in any form found any degree of favor with the Protestant

IV. Testimony  
of the earliest  
Protestant Sym-  
bolism.

party, whether in Germany or Holland or France, or in the British Isles.

The grand Confession of Augsburg, in which the symbolism of the Reformation takes its rise, recognizes throughout, in various connections and phrases, the general Augustinian doctrine as to the inherited pravity of the race, the guilty and lost condition of man, the impossibility of salvation (Art. II) excepting through the Gospel. It also recognizes (Art. III) the mediation of Christ in its true nature as a scheme of reconciliation and a full atonement not only for original guilt, but also for all actual sins of men. It further defines justification through the merits of Christ (Art. IV) as an event occurring on earth and in time; and (Art. VII) associates such justification, and its consequent experiences in the new life, with the historic Church—the *Versammlung aller Gläubigen*, to which belong the Word and the Sacraments. With these statements its definition (Art. XII) of repentance, as an event occurring in time, and in view of the Gospel, is in entire harmony. And finally, in its solemn exposition of the Judgment, (Art. XVII) it declares that Christ shall raise up all the dead, and shall give unto the godly and elect eternal life and everlasting joys, but ungodly men and the devils He shall condemn unto endless torments—*ut sine fine crucientur*. To this declaration is added the significant clause condemning as heretical the Anabaptists, who think that to condemned men and the devils there shall be an end of torments. It is to be observed here, that the fact that this fixed and unending condition is described as something subsequent to the judgment, by no means implies that the condition of condemned men and devils was changeable before the judgment; the

description of the historic error here declared to be untenable, directly precludes this supposition.

Nothing appears in the Formula of Concord, or the Catechisms of Luther, or in other minor Lutheran symbols such as the Articles of Smalcald or the Saxon Visitation Articles, A. D. 1592, which is at variance with the creed of Augsburg on this point. The historic position of Lutheranism in opposition to the notion of purgatorial purification in the case of imperfect believers, and to prayers and masses offered for the purpose of improving the condition of the dead, is from first to last utterly irreconcilable with the dogma of a Gospel to be proclaimed to mankind in the intermediate state. Had such a notion found any measure of currency in that period, it would certainly have been noticed in the striking commentary in the Formula of Concord, (Art. ix) on the *Descensus ad Inferos*. This Article first adverts to the various questions which had arisen with respect to this phrase; where and how our Lord Jesus Christ descended into hell; whether this came to pass before or after his death; whether He descended in soul only or divinity only, or indeed in soul and body; whether this came to pass spiritually or corporeally; and whether this article is to be referred to the passion, or to the glorious victory and triumph of Christ. Having thus stated the current theories and queries, the Article proceeds to counsel that, inasmuch as the truth in the case can be comprehended neither by our senses nor by our reason, but is to be received by faith alone, it should be believed and taught as simply as possible.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It ought to be enough for us to know that Christ descended into hell, that He destroyed hell for all believers, and that we through Him have been snatched from the power of death and Satan, from eternal damnation, and even from the jaws of hell.

Had the writers of the Formula had any glimpse of the modern theory of a salvation after death to be obtained through the Descensus, they would certainly have made the fact manifest in this formal statement of conflicting opinions.

Turning to the Reformed symbolism of the period, we are led to the same result. The Zwinglian Articles, A. D. 1523, while setting forth the Augustinian doctrine respecting the guilty estate of man and the need of salvation through Christ alone, and the necessity for repentance and faith in this life, directly declare the Roman dogma of Purgatory—*purgatorium post hanc vitam*—to be without any warrant in the Word of God. Zwingli indeed refuses to condemn one who, in his solicitude for the dead, should offer supplications to God on their behalf. He also recognizes the possibility of the salvation of dying infants, even among the heathen,—anticipating thus the modern doctrine that all infants dying in infancy are saved by Christ through the sanctifying power of the Spirit. In like manner he admits that there may be elect persons among the heathen, who are saved without specific knowledge of Christ, and ventures the polemic affirmation that the fate of Socrates and Seneca is better than that of some among the popes. Yet his own essential doctrine, as indicated in the Articles, is that Christ is the only way to salvation for all who were, who are, or who shall be,—that He is the Head of all believers, and of His

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But in what way these things have been brought to pass, let us not curiously inquire, but let us reserve the knowledge of this thing to another world, where not only this mystery, but many other things which in this life have been simply believed by us, shall be revealed—things which exceed the reach of our blind reason." *Form. Conc.*; Art. IX. See on this Art. SCHAFF, *Creeeds of Christendom*, I: 296-8.

Church, the true communion of saints on the earth,—and that whosoever believes in Him in this life shall be saved, and whosoever in this life believeth not shall be condemned, since all saving truth is made manifest to mankind in His Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

The Theses of Berne, A. D. 1526, in like manner declare that the Scripture knows nothing of a purgatory after death, and that all masses and other offices for the dead are useless. The French or Gallie Confession, A. D. 1559, and the Belgic Confession, A. D. 1561, contain no specific allusions to universalistic restitution in whatever form. But their general doctrine respecting the guilt and doom of humanity without the Gospel, respecting the Gospel as a divine offer to men in this life, and respecting prayers for the dead, are in entire harmony with the Protestant position as already described. The Second Helvetic Confession, A. D. 1566, declares in general the full allegiance of its adherents to the orthodox and catholic faith, on these points as on others, as set forth in the ancient creeds. It also affirms specifically (Ch. xxv) that the faithful after death go directly to Christ, and need not the prayers of the living,—that unbelievers are at death cast into hell, from which there is no escape,—that the doctrine of purgatory is opposed to the Scriptures, and to the plenary expiation and cleansing through Christ. It further (Ch. xii) condemns as heretics those who teach the ultimate salvation of all the godless; and in various phrases and connections limits salvation distinctly to earth and time.

The Heidelberg Catechism, A. D. 1563, which has commanded such general respect as a calm, catholic,

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<sup>1</sup> For the exceptional position of Zwingli respecting the heathen, see SCHAFF: *Creeds, &c.*, I: 382-4. Also, DORNER, *Hist. Prot. Theol.*, Sect. II: Ch. I.



spiritual formulary of belief, falls into line at these points with the antecedent Reformed confessions. While it has no occasion to repeat what they had so often declared respecting purgatory and prayers for the dead, its doctrinal teachings clearly preclude not only this, but every other form of universalism in the application of grace. It affirms (Ans. 7) that our nature became so corrupt through our first parents that we are all conceived and born in sin, and (9) that God is terribly displeased with our inborn as well as actual sins, and will punish them in just judgment in time and in eternity; and also (10) that His justice requires that all sin, being committed against His most high majesty, shall be punished with extreme, that is, with everlasting punishment of both body and soul. It presents (21) the Gospel as a present remedy for sin, and one to be at once embraced; and (29-30) sets forth Christ as the only Savior, in whom men have all that is necessary to their salvation. It teaches (103) that believers are by the working of the Spirit to grow into all practical holiness on the earth, and are thus to begin in this life the everlasting Sabbath; and that at last (52) Christ is to cast all His and their enemies into everlasting condemnation, and to take all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joy and glory. The process of grace, as here sketched, is described throughout as a process begun and carried forward in time: no hint of a *post mortem* salvation appears at any point.

Without recurring to other continental symbols of this period, we may close this portion of our survey with a brief reference to the Canons of the Synod of Dort, A. D. 1619, in which what has been already stated receives emphatic indorsement. In this final symbol (Cap. 11), the rich and immediate promise of the Gospel

is said to be offered, together with the command to repent and believe, to all nations and to all men without distinction, wherever the Word of God is proclaimed. But the command and the offer are represented as made to men in this life, so that the elect in due time may be gathered together into the one Church of Christ on earth. The fact that this memorable Synod was convened, not so much to set forth the evangelical faith in general as to define the five specific tenets in controversy between the Calvinistic and the Arminian parties within the common Protestantism, adds special emphasis to its incidental references to the true nature of the Gospel as a scheme of grace provided for mankind, not in the intermediate state, but on the earth. We find in it no trace or recognition of the universalism of Origen, or any other type of restorationist opinion, as either permissible in thought or current in fact. — In a word, all of the long series of early continental creeds, both Lutheran and Reformed, from the Confession of Augsburg down to the Canons of Dort, bear but one and the same testimony: from first to last, they decisively exclude the doctrine of Dörner and Nitzsch and Van Oosterzee, and their English and American allies, from the circle of evangelical faith.

The same conclusion will be reached upon a careful survey of British symbolism from the first Scotch Confession, A. D. 1560, down to the era of the symbols of Westminster. — The Scotch Confession declares (Art. III) that death everlasting he had, and sail have power an dominion over all that have not been, ar not, or sail not be regenerate from above; quhilk regeneratioun is wrocht be the power of the holie Gost, working in the hartes of

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of earlier British  
Symbolism.

the elect of God and assured faith in the promise of God, revealed to us in his word, be quihilk faith we apprehend Christ Jesus, with the graces and benefites promised in him. After having set forth on this foundation the essential doctrines of religion, including especially the person, offices and passion of our Lord, and the ministries and fruits of the Spirit as seen in the good works of believers, the Confession goes on (Art. XVII) to declare that, having lived out the Christian life on earth, the Elect departed are in peace and rest fra their labours: Not that they sleep, and come to a certaine oblivion, as some Phantastickes do affirme: bot that they are delivered fra all feare and torment, and all temptatioun: As contrariwise the reprobate and unfaithfull departed have anguish, torment and paine that can not be expressed: Sa that nouthere are the one nor the uther in sik sleep that they feele not joy or torment. In Art. XXV. on the gifts and issues of grace, we have like declarations as to the relation of religion in this life to the state of the soul after death, and especially at and after the final judgment. The Second Scotch Confession, A. D. 1580, in its terrific denunciation of all kynde of Papistrie in general and particular headis, enumerates as special subjects of reprobation not only His cruell judgement aganis infants departing without the sacrament, but also His divilish messe, His prophane sacrifice for the sinnis of the deade and the quicke, His purgatory, prayers for the deade, and other kindred errors. Both symbols are alike incapable of any interpretation which would involve a recognition of any form of salvation during the intermediate state.

The question respecting the teaching of Anglican symbolism is one of special interest in view of the claim broadly asserted by Farrar and Maurice, that one who

avows himself an adherent of the Church of England, may still hold and teach the dogma of *post mortem* probation, or even of the final salvation of all men, in the full sense and scope maintained by Origen. The answer to this claim must be found in a careful examination of the Thirty-Nine Articles, especially in their relation to the formulary of Edward VI, A. D. 1553. This preliminary symbol contained forty-two Articles of Religion, and of these the last three were omitted in what became under Elizabeth and still remains the authoritative confession of Episcopacy, British and American. The first and second of these omitted Articles<sup>1</sup> related to the error of Psychopannychism, and of the Millenarians, and have no special significance in this connection. The reason for their omission may possibly be found in the decline of the heresies which they were designed to controvert, or perhaps in the current conviction that their insertion in such a general or national confession of belief was needless. The final Article declares that those also are worthy of condemnation who endeavor at this time to restore the dangerous opinion that all men, be they never so ungodly, shall at length be saved, when they have suffered pains for their sins a certain time appointed by divine justice.

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<sup>1</sup>Art. XL. They which say that the souls of such as depart hence, do sleep, being without all sense, feeling or perceiving, until the day of judgment; or affirm that the souls die with the bodies, and at the last day shall be raised up with the same, do utterly dissent from the right belief, declared to us in holy Scripture.

Art. XLI. They that go about to renew the fable of heretics called Millenarii, be repugnant to holy Scripture, and cast themselves headlong into a Jewish dotage.

For the complete text of the Forty-Two Articles, see Liturgies of Edward VI; *Parker Soc. Pub.*

Can the omission of this Article, during the reign of Elizabeth, nine years later, be construed as a silent admission into the circle of allowable beliefs, of what had been characterized in the Article itself as a dangerous opinion? Condemning the dogma of universal salvation as applied merely to those who are called the ungodly, can its scope be so broadened as to include the salvation of all the heathen, and can its omission justify the conclusion that purgatorial sufferings are to be utilized by God for the universal restoration of humanity? Opposing as it does the notion of a possible improvement of the ungodly after a time, through penal sufferings, can such omission be interpreted as a recognition of the hope that all mankind are finally to be saved, not through purgation, but through the Gospel? It is true that in the Third Article of this creed it is said respecting Christ, that his ghost departing from Him was with the ghosts that are in prison or in Hell, and did preach to the same—*illisque predicavit*; but the object of this preaching is not at all described, while in other Articles the mediatorial work of Christ is represented as occurring specifically on the earth. Prayers and masses for the dead are forbidden, on the only ground possible,—that the estate of the dead is fixed and changeless: and the papal dogma of purgatory is directly denounced as a fond thing vainly feigned and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but rather repugnant to the word of God. In view of such evidences, the inference that the omission of this Article involves a recognition of Origenism in any form, can not be justified.

Turning directly to the Thirty-Nine Articles, we shall find it by no means difficult to see that they afford no real shelter for such Origenism. The condemnation of

purgatory, the prohibition of prayers for the dead, (Art. XXII) remain in them, as in the formulary of Edward VI; masses in the which the priest was said to offer Christ for the quick and the dead, (Art. XXXI) are declared to be blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits. The clause in the older creed respecting the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison, (Art. III) is significantly omitted.<sup>1</sup> The guilt and condemnation of men, although they be diligent to frame their lives by the law, or the light of nature, are (Art. XVIII) solemnly affirmed. The name of Jesus Christ is said to be the only name whereby man can be saved, and the acceptance of salvation through Him is set forth as the first, the immediate duty of all mankind. The judgment of all by Christ at the last day (Art. IV) is directly declared, and on that judgment eternal issues are said to impend. In no particular, whether by declaration or by silence, can it justly be held that these Articles leave room for the dogma of a Gospel beyond the grave. In spirit if not in form, the teaching of the forty-second Art. of Edward still abides as the accepted doctrine of the Anglican communion: Those are worthy of condemnation who endeavor at this time to restore or to introduce the dangerous opinion, that men are to be saved after death, whether through pain and suffering inflicted by divine justice, or through the proclamation of a salvation to be realized somewhere in eternity.

With these teachings, the Anglican Catechism, A. D.

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<sup>1</sup>If the omission of the XLII. Art. of Edward VI. is to be construed as a tacit admission of the universalism which that Art. condemned, why is not the omission of the reference to the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison, a proof that the later thought of the Church had set aside that interpretation?

1549, and the Lambeth Articles, A. D. 1595, are in full harmony. The Catechism associates repentance and faith and the new life which the believer is required to lead on earth, directly with the sacraments and ordinances of the earthly Church ; so that no one can well believe that repentance and faith and their consequents can occur hereafter, without believing also that the Church as an institution, with its sacraments and instrumentalities, exists substantially in the intermediate state as truly as in the present life. We are also earnestly instructed to pray, not only that God would keep us from all sin and wickedness in the present life, but that He would preserve us from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death. The Lambeth Articles though devoted specially to the propounding of the dogma of predestination, distinctly represent the divine act of predestination as unfolding itself within the present life and nowhere else, —the number of the predestinated, the condemnation of the reprobate, the exercise of saving faith, justification, and perseverance, all being experiences realized historically on the earth and among men. And in the same temper the sure and necessary damnation of men at death, in view of their earthly impenitence and unbelief, is decisively affirmed, even to the extreme of reprobation.

The Irish Articles of Religion, dated A. D. 1615, and bearing the imprimatur of the learned and venerable Archbishop Ussher, are in still wider contrast with the conception of a Gospel to be preached after death. Not merely at the point of the divine decrees, but as to the fall and the guilty estate of man before justification, and to the nature of justification, and its proper application in the present life, these Articles distinctly and imperatively rule out this false hope. Their doctrine of faith, of sanctification, of the fear and service of God, contem-

plates all these, not as experiences possible in a future state, but as experiences to be attained and verified on earth. The New Testament (83) is a message full of grace and truth, bringing joyful tidings unto mankind; and on the manner in which mankind receive that message in this world, (31) their eternal condition is represented as depending. It is said (101) that after this life is ended, the souls of believers be presently received into heaven, there to enjoy unspeakable comforts, while the souls of the wicked are cast into hell, there to endure endless torments. And it is decisively added (102) that the doctrine of the Church of Rome concerning Limbus Patrum, Limbus Puerorum, Purgatory, Prayer for the Dead, . . . is vainly invented, without all warrant of Holy Scripture: yea, and is contrary unto the same. This strong and clear symbol is thus in entire concord with the Thirty-Nine Articles, and indeed with the body and substance of the best Anglican Theology from the era of the Reformation down to our own time.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Spirits in Prison*: app. on the Wider Hope in English Theology. Professor Plumtre here gathers up diligently the somewhat scant evidences of universalistic opinion, to be found in the Cambridge Platonists, in Jeremy Taylor, in Tillotson and Burnet, and eminently in Bishop Butler, whom he seems especially desirous to claim. In each case, and conspicuously in that of Butler, the proof is palpably insufficient. The argument is largely one from silence, or from possible inference, rather than direct quotation. The attempt to identify Butler with restorationism will seem strange indeed to those who are familiar with his profound reasonings respecting punishment, and even future and eternal punishment, as a necessary doctrine of Natural Theology. Careful examination of the *Analogy* will make clear to any one the conviction that, while the nature of his discussion rendered it needless for that great author to say much on the topic here in question, the principles laid down by him imperatively rule out the dogma



The position of the Confession and Catechisms of Westminster as a final consummation of the long series of creeds originating in the Reformation, or flowering forth from it, justifies the laying of special stress upon the teaching of these Presbyterian symbols in the matter under discussion.—It may be added that, while they were the substantial embodiment of the Reformed Confessions and Articles which had preceded them in time, they were also in themselves more comprehensive and elaborate, and on many matters of this class more definite and authoritative. Their wide acceptance also, not only in the British Isles, but in many other lands, and their present prominence as representing the belief of a very wide section of Protestantism, may be regarded as adding special significance and value to their declarations.

Respecting the fallen estate of man, and his need of such a remedy as the Gospel during the present life, these symbols are both distinct and emphatic. Like the Irish Articles, from which indeed they largely sprang, they teach that God regards the race as sinful and in a deep sense guilty even before actual transgression, and in a still deeper sense sinful and guilty after actual transgression commences. They declare, not merely that the rejection of Christ and His grace is the crowning sin of humanity, but also (Ch. xv: 4) that there is no sin of man so small but it deserves damnation. In the Chapter on the Law of God (xix) we are taught that the Law can only convict and condemn even the most virtuous of mankind: and elsewhere (x: 4. L. C.

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of a Gospel after death. It is hardly credible that such a belief had any place in his thought.—See FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*: Excursus I.

93-96) that those who be ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature—at least where such persons have the opportunity of knowing the historic Christ—can not be saved. It is said further, (IX: 3) that man by his fall has lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying, or involving or bringing with it, salvation; and that, even where the knowledge of the historic Christ has been received, (x: 1-2) men will never embrace Him without the gracious ministration and aid of the Holy Spirit. All mankind are said (L. C. 27-29) to be even by nature children of wrath, slaves to Satan, under the divine displeasure, and liable to punishment.

On this ground, the Gospel is to be everywhere set forth, under the Christian dispensation, as the only and the effectual remedy for the sins of the world, (VII: 6) and as a remedy applicable on earth, and worthy to be proclaimed in its fullness, evidence, and spiritual efficacy, to all the nations of men. Christ is also described, (VIII: 1, 6) as a Mediator for our humanity, and his mediation as an event occurring in time, (L. C. 59) and manifesting its efficacy in time. So in the Chapters following, (x-xv) effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, saving faith, repentance unto life, are described as experiences to be obtained, not hereafter, but here—in this present state of grace and probation. The notion that mankind are innocent until they have manifested their moral disposition by the conscious rejection of Christ and his Gospel, and the consequent notion that this Gospel must be made the instrument of a gracious probation hereafter to all those who die in ignorance of it, are thus alike decisively excluded: they can not possibly be harmonized with the Westminster teaching.

In like manner death is represented in these symbols as a final and decisive experience, terminating once for all the opportunity of grace. They exclude the notion of conditional immortality, an immortality not belonging to the natural man but received through grace, by the assertion (vi: 2) that man is made in the image of God, with a reasonable and immortal soul; and by the declaration in connection with death (xxxii: 1) that the soul after death, having an immortal subsistence, immediately returns to God who gave it. They also, in the same chapter, exclude the notion of an unconscious slumber of the soul during the intermediate state, by the direct affirmation that the soul at death neither dies nor sleeps,—is not unconscious, but active in intelligence and feeling, and fitted every way to its new sphere and state of unending being. What that state and sphere are, we are taught in the further declaration, that the souls of the righteous are received at once into the highest heavens, where they behold the face of God in light and glory, and where they wait for the full redemption of their bodies; also, that the souls of the wicked are at death cast into hell, where they remain in torments and utter darkness—reserved to the judgment of the great day; L. C. 55-6; S. C. 37. These expressions certainly imply absolute changelessness in the two conditions thus graphically described; and the biblical texts quoted in confirmation are capable of no other interpretation. But the Confession still further puts the question at rest by the direct statement, primarily intended to exclude the Romish error as to purgatory, but in fact shutting out hardly less conclusively the opinion here discussed; that besides these two places for souls separated from their bodies, the Scripture acknowledgeth none.

The language of these symbols (XXXIII: 1-2) in regard to the commitment of all judgment unto Christ, to His second visible coming to the earth at the end of the world (VIII: 4) in order to execute judgment, and to the nature and issues of that judgment throughout an unending eternity, is in full harmony with these strong declarations. That there is to be no Gospel forevermore, among the unrighteous dead on whom the verdict of the judgment has been pronounced, is very clear. Over against the *vitam aeternam* indicated in the creed of Nicea, stands the *ignem aeternum* described with such solemnity in that ancient symbol; and unchangeableness and absolute endlessness are to be affirmed of the fire that punishes, exactly as they are affirmed of the life of the just—full, glorious, everlasting. It is also said, not that men are judged according to decisions respecting Christ which they may have reached during their intermediate condition, but (XXXIII: 1) in the very phrase of Paul, according to what they have done in the body,—their acts and dispositions in this life being the final and the decisive test. We are indeed taught that this judgment is to be just and discriminating, and even tender,—each soul giving account of itself, and being estimated equitably according to its own deeds, light, opportunity while in this state of probation. The popular fancy of an indiscriminate assignment of all classes and conditions of men, the ignorant and young, infants and heathen, equally with the most enlightened and obstinate transgressors, to one and the same form and degree of suffering and penalty, is carefully ruled out by these symbols, as it is also repugnant to our moral feeling and contrary to Scripture. But the absolute changelessness of the estate to which that judgment assigns each soul, whatever its relative grade

of guilt or desert, is as fully affirmed here as it is in the Word of God. We see through the solemn light of that sublime scene nothing resembling a change in the character or condition of humanity forever and forever. We are therefore taught (L. C. 90) that after this event the mediation of grace ceases finally, and Christ, in the terse phrase of the Irish Articles (104) shall deliver up the kingdom to his Father, and God shall be all in all,—not in the sense of having actually saved all mankind either through the Gospel or without it, but in the ultimate sense of having His equitable sway established eternally, alike over the holy and the lost.

In respect to children dying in infancy, and all other persons described as being incapable of being outwardly called by the preaching of the Word, the Westminster Confession (x : 3) declares that they are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit who worketh when and where and how he pleaseth. This declaration is indeed limited to elect infants, or the children of true believers, but this limitation is not to be construed into an affirmation that the children of others than believers are eternally lost. The compilers of this well poised creed were probably not prepared to make any declaration on this broader point; they were wisely silent on a problem where the light of Scripture seemed to be dim, and where they perhaps could not have agreed among themselves. They were in fact answering, as the Synod of Dort had answered before them, an accusation broadly urged against the Calvinistic party, as we learn from the Conclusion appended to the Canons of Dort, to the effect that they held that many children of the faithful are torn, guiltless, from the breasts of their mothers, and tyrannically plunged into hell, notwithstanding their

baptism and the prayers of the Church in their behalf. It was in reply to this monstrous charge, that the Synod (Cap. 1: Art. 17) testified that the children of believers are holy, not by nature, but in virtue of the covenant of grace, in which they together with their parents are comprehended; and that godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy. Thirty years afterward, the Assembly of Westminster, in the same spirit, and in view doubtless of like allegations current in Britain as on the continent, made their cognate declaration as to elect infants,—appending to it the delicate allusion to other persons—not pagans, but imbeciles and insane—who are incapable of being outwardly called.

It should be freely admitted that this language, thus historically interpreted, does not solve the broader problem. It is also to be admitted that many Calvinistic divines of that period, and of the century following, went so far as to affirm positively the damnation of infants not born within the covenant of grace. But it is obvious that, whether the Assembly limited this phrase absolutely to the offspring of elect parents, or included in it, as some of them doubtless did, others chosen and set apart by the gracious wisdom of God unto salvation, they agreed in teaching that, through the mediatorial work of Christ made available in their behalf, such children were—not merely given a chance to hear of Him and possibly believe on Him in a future state,—but the rather graciously led forth into the immortal life as sanctified souls from the outset, to be divinely trained by methods unknown to us into perfection of character like that of Christ himself. The declaration that the Holy Spirit worketh when and where and how

He pleaseth, was doubtless intended to indicate that mysterious process by which such little ones are cleansed in the very article of death from all pollution of their nature, tenderly biased toward holiness as our first parents were, and thus fitted at once, not for a probation in eternity, but for a holy and blessed residence with the Lord forevermore.

Such is the current belief of nearly all who now adhere to these careful, balanced, profound, spiritual symbols. Protestantism of this type does not accept the bare notion that what is done for infants dying in infancy, is simply to let them grow into conscious responsibility in the intermediate state, so that at some time in that future condition they may consider and decide the question of character for themselves. Existing Calvinism rather holds a far higher view,—that by processes deeper than conscious volition, and antecedent to all moral choices, such children are saved at death, even before responsible action commences, and so enter upon a life not of option and testing, but of holiness instant and above all change.<sup>1</sup> And it is not an unwarrantable stretch of such current belief, to express the hope that all infants dying in pagan as well as in Christian lands—a vast multitude, constituting a large majority of the human race, are thus saved through the Spirit from the sting of spiritual death, and are set

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<sup>1</sup>On the proper interpretation of this clause see MITCHELL, *West. Assembly*, p. 397. Also, as to the historic position of Presbyterianism, HODGE, *Theol.*; Vol. III; 605. Also, KRAUTH, *Conservative Ref.*, p. 434, for the narrower interpretation. Poem of Rev. Michael Wigglesworth, *Day of Doom*, published A. D. 1662, in which the damnation of infants not elect is defended. See also *Presbyterian Review*, April, 1887, on the Westminster doctrine as to the Salvation of Infants—an interesting historical exposition, yet inconclusive on the main point.

forth in the immortal life from the outset under influences and conditions which permit the development of their sanctified nature into immediate perfection, without any thing resembling what we call probation.

Respecting the state and prospects of the pagan world, these symbols justify indeed but slight affirmation. We are faithfully taught that the condition of man by nature is one of condemnation, and that there is for man in any part of the world no salvation except in Christ. But for the dead, we are forbidden (L. C. 185) to offer prayer; supplication for those who have committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, even while such persons are alive, is also forbidden. But prayer is enjoined in the same sentence, in the broadest form, for all other sorts of men living, or that shall live hereafter;—for the overthrow of the kingdom of sin and Satan, (L. C. 191) and the propagation of the Gospel throughout the whole world. The kingdom of grace, in contrast with the kingdom of Satan, is (S. C. 102) to become universal; and Christ is yet to reign (L. C. 53) over all the heathen races, subduing our humanity unto Himself. The breadth and sweep of the Westminster teachings in regard to the historic growth, ecumenical relations, and ultimate universality of the Gospel, have too often in the interest of partisan interpretations been sadly ignored. Over against the limiting doctrine of election, the Confession and Catechisms carefully place in clear antithesis, the consummating doctrine of a Gospel for man as man, the world over. Yet we are nowhere taught that the mediatorial work of Christ extends beyond the boundaries of the present life. The interpretation of the phrase, He descended into hell (L. C. 50) as signifying simply that He continued in the state of the dead, and under the power of death, is conclusive



against the opinion that He went into Hades, there to institute another Gospel or another dispensation, for those who had not heard of Him in the present life. Beyond these suggestions the symbols leave the problem of the pagan world, with all its perplexities, substantially where the New Testament leaves it,—meanwhile enjoining upon all believers the duty of laboring and praying steadfastly for that great, sad world as if it really were lost.

A brief glance at some of the more recent creeds and confessions of evangelical Christendom may serve still further to confirm the conclusion already in view.—The Savoy Confession, A. D. 1658, was here, as in all important elements of doctrine, identical with the Symbols of Westminster, and must be interpreted as a further affirmation of the same position on this point as on others. The Waldensian Confession, A. D. 1655, presents the same view of humanity as corrupted and condemned through the fall, and of the plan of salvation as a remedial scheme applicable on earth and in time. The impressive Litany of the Moravian Communion, A. D. 1749, representing the best belief as well as experience of continental Protestantism in the next century, suggests no other teaching, even by remote implication. The Methodist Articles of Religion, A. D. 1784, which at many points follow so closely the Anglican Articles, agree with these in denouncing purgatory, with its associated errors, as a fond thing vainly invented, and grounded on no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God. They also declare the sacrifice of masses for the dead to be a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit. In their descriptions of the Gospel, they

**VII. Testimony  
of more Modern  
Symbolism.**

adhere closely to the conceptions and also to the language current in Protestantism from the era of the Augsburg Confession; justification, good works, repentance, salvation by grace, are all described in them as events of earth and time.

What the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thus agree in holding, the evangelical symbols of our own time, Continental, British, American, without an exception corroborate. Critical study of these formularies of existing faith will make it manifest to every mind, that the dogma of salvation after death has no more actual warrant in them, though it be less directly eliminated or condemned, than the Roman dogma of purgatory. The hope that the Gospel is preached or is to be preached in the other world, is, though less formally yet as truly precluded in them, as are prayers or the saying of masses for the dead. The claim that this hope is not contra-confessional is therefore one which it seems, in view of these testimonies, impossible for the candid mind to admit: the plea that it is extra-confessional is hardly less invalid, when considered in the convergent light shed on the great problems of the future by recent as well as by the older canons of belief. Origenism, in a word, has no more place in the symbolism of modern or current than of ancient Christianity. Whether it be in itself true or false, there can be little doubt that the consensus of the creeds of all the ages is decisively against it.

Nor can the argument derived from these symbolic testimonies be impaired by describing this dogma as a historic opinion, an allowable affirmation, so far current and accepted within the Church, as to render confessional condemnation impracticable; or as so slight and incidental a speculation as to call for no formal recog-

dition from the Church. The first defense can not be justified from the records of Christian history in either earlier or later times. For while individual minds here or there, from Origen down to Dorner, have held this dogma, the decisive fact is that no branch of the Church of God has ever held or countenanced it as an integral factor in its organic belief. And the reason for this fact is surely not to be found in the theory that the Church has been afraid, in view of the currency gained by the dogma, to express the condemnation which it has been constrained at heart to cherish. The second defense is equally untenable. For, if the dogma were true and were sufficiently verified, it could never have been regarded by the Church as slight or insignificant. Long ere this, its tremendous implications would have been found spreading their cancerous roots through the entire organism of Christian belief: its sweeping demands would have carried with them sooner or later a reconstruction of Christian theology at a hundred points. If the Church has refused to give this dogma confessional recognition, it must therefore be for some other reason than that it is nothing more than a slight, theoretic, uninfluential speculation.

If it be said that this opinion is altogether modern, and is not recognized in Christian Symbolism because it is a product of the present age, a new discovery and evolution of divine truth, then the plea of its chief English advocates must be altogether abandoned, and the opinion be frankly confessed to be a novelty unknown hitherto to historic Christendom. But in this view another strong presumption is at once raised against it on the general ground, that what has not been discovered by Christian theology for eighteen centuries is not likely to be true, and on the specific

ground that Christian-Symbolism, if it has not condemned the error itself, has on one side openly condemned other errors clearly cognate with it, and on the other has positively affirmed a series of beliefs which are in visible and irreconcilable antagonism with it. Were the dogma scripturally and philosophically sound, it is hardly conceivable that it should not have gained symbolic recognition ere this: the resolute refusal of the creeds of Christendom to own relationship with it, or stretch their protecting wings over it, is surely a distinct and swift witness against its legitimacy and its worth.

Terminating at this point our cursory survey in this broad field, the results may be summed up in the following conclusions:

That the dogma of a salvation after death, to be secured through the offering of Christ and the proclamation of the Gospel in His name to infants and imbecile persons, to the heathen nations, to all who have not adequately heard of the Redeemer in this life, is one which has gained recognition in no creed of Christendom, from the earliest ages down to our own time:

That the failure to obtain such recognition can not be explained, either on the theory that this dogma is a mere speculation of insufficient importance to be noted in any creed, or on the theory that it has always been an allowable opinion, so harmless or so nearly accurate and sound, as to call for no confessional condemnation:

That in fact, by strong protest against kindred forms of error, by direct implication, by the assertion of positive truths and doctrines entirely incongruous with this dogma or hostile to it, and in other kindred ways, the symbolism of the Church, ancient and modern, Greek

and Roman and Protestant, has arrayed itself distinctly and invariably against this opinion :

That a distinct growth of doctrine may be recognized in this survey of the Christian canons of belief, not toward this opinion, but obviously and strongly against it; and that it is from Protestantism, and Protestantism in its most elevated and spiritual forms, that the dogma receives its most decisive condemnation :

And finally, that the attempt to introduce this dogma into the accepted creeds of Christendom would require not only a reconstruction of these creeds at many vital points, but in fact an abandonment or extensive modification of some of their most essential doctrines,—a new theology thus growing into confessional form, not by the development and expansion of preceding confessions, but on their ruins, or through such revolutionary transmutations as would leave but little else than the fragments of the Old Faith.

## CHAPTER V.

### *THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY.*

Two other tests of the dogma of Salvation after Death remain to be considered,—that which is drawn from a careful study of this dogma in the light thrown upon it from Christian Theology; and that which may be derived from the broad field of Christian experience. While the tests of Scripture, specific and general, and of historic Symbolism, as already presented, are indeed quite sufficient to justify the rejection of this dogma as an article of Christian belief, that rejection may be made yet more prompt and more imperative, if we subject it to these further forms of testing. In the present chapter, only the first of these will be introduced—the witness of Christian Theology.

Two very diverse positions are assumed at this point by the advocates of the dogma in question. The first describes it as a mere sentiment, a simple speculation, a problem in exegesis, an allowable form of opinion, but something of small theologic moment, unimportant in its influence on religious thought as well as action, and quite admissible as a simple theory into the large circle of incidental and unconfessional beliefs. The second describes it rather as the foremost premonition or manifestation of a new theology,—having in itself vast revolutionary power, and destined to exert a strong formative influence on the opinions and teachings of the Church of God henceforth. The characteristic features of the new theology which is to be reared on this

basis are definitely given : the necessity for it is strongly affirmed, and its growth and success in the near future are said to be assured. It is to be a theology of reason rather than dogma, and eminently of intuition rather than logic,—a theology in which an original mode of interpreting Scripture is to figure largely, and the Bible is to be studied and expounded as a literature, rather than in the technical methods now current,—a theology in which less is to be made of the individual soul, and more of the race, and in which the natural sciences and the wider study of man, and what is vaguely described as the religion of humanity, are somehow to be utilized in working out a large and beneficent reconstruction of all existing dogmas,—a theology in which eminently a new and fresh and rational eschatology, including especially this dogma of *post mortem* probation and salvation, is to be a central and even crowning characteristic.

Of these two descriptions there is reason for believing that the second expresses much more nearly the essential fact. It requires indeed but slight observation to perceive that, from the nature of the case, this opinion can never hide itself permanently in the cloister or the school, as a mere speculation,—that, at least in such a country as this, it must either live an evanescent life as one among the thousand fanciful notions current among us, or assume practical form, and claim the right both to regulate thought, and to influence the practical activities of the Church. Nor can any one easily doubt that a full acceptance of this dogma as a practical opinion, must and will carry with it very wide, even revolutionary, changes in the current dogmatic belief and teaching. Once admitted as a Christian doctrine, securely established on scriptural and philosophic grounds, that dogma would at length compel, as we have indeed al-

ready discovered in our survey of existing Symbolism, a thorough reconstruction of the great fabric of Christian Theology at almost every cardinal point—the character and plan and methods of God, moral government and sin and guilt, the mission of Christ and the scheme of grace, the idea as well as the range of salvation, all demanding together such definition and readjustment as shall bring them into harmonious conjunction around this new constructive and determining principle.

In approaching this branch of the subject under discussion, the more general relations of this opinion to what may be termed Christian Orthodoxy, first demand our consideration.—

**I. General Relations of this Dogma to Christian Orthodoxy.**

Here we are at once confronted by the positive and earnest claim to orthodoxy of those who represent this dogma. The Continental school, whose chief representatives are found in Martensen and Dorner, may indeed be said to have had this claim in some fashion admitted,—at least so far as this, that its teaching, while failing to secure any extensive acceptance, has never yet called forth any form of ecclesiastical or popular condemnation. In Germany the dogma has indeed retained the character of a theologic hypothesis or an exegetical riddle, to an extent which would be impossible in any other country, and for this reason has had little occasion to face the question whether it can by any possibility be harmonized with those clear and strong symbols which have come down to the German Church as its choicest heritage from the Reformation. The English school has insisted tenaciously on a decided harmony between its teaching and the Thirty-Nine Articles,—claiming especially that, by the omission of the forty-second Article



from the Creed of Edward VI., room was distinctly made for the opinion which it advocates. Notwithstanding the opposite opinion of leading minds in the Established Church, and the adverse decisions of English ecclesiastical courts, this claim is still, even passionately, urged. Unofficial indorsement by prominent divines, from Cudworth and Jeremy Taylor down to men still living, is also claimed with a degree of confidence hardly justified by the somewhat scant evidences adduced.<sup>1</sup>

The American school has sought like immunity in the presence of kindred difficulties. The phrase, Progressive Orthodoxy, has been specially selected by some of its leading representatives, as an accurate description of their special tenet, when studied in its relationship to existing orthodox thought. The new dogma, with its cognate opinions and suggestions, is alleged to be in no sense a retrocession backward or downward, or even a departure at any angle however slight from the historic, evangelical faith. They affirm it rather to be simply a forward and upward movement along the lines of what has already been received and accepted as the Christian belief—a movement which does not subvert at any point the foundations of the faith, but which the rather carries the acknowledged principia of Christian belief on toward new, legitimately inferential and spiritually important results. Another representative writer first defines orthodoxy as the continuous historical development of the doctrine of Jesus and his disciples; and then claims to be in the direct line of such development, even while putting himself in distinct oppo-

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<sup>1</sup> MAURICE, *Theol. Essays*, Conclusion. FARRAR, *Eternal Hope*, Preface. PLUMPTRE, *Spirits in Prison*: App. The Wider Hope in English Theology.

sition to this doctrine as now cherished by the Church, on points as vital as the character and government of God, the atonement, the work of the Spirit, the judgment and retribution. And still another insists on defining the new theology as a direct outgrowth of the old, and a large improvement upon it, while asserting that doctrines now regarded as substantial parts of orthodoxy are mere reflections of the social conditions in which they were formulated—more specifically, that such doctrines as divine sovereignty, total depravity and the atonement, are shot through and through with colors drawn from the corruptions of Roman society. He tells us that while the Bible may have furnished casual texts which justify our holding these theologic conceptions, it did not furnish the conceptions themselves; and that, if the Bible had been used rather to supply conceptions of doctrine in some more generic and spiritual way, we would not have what now goes for orthodoxy.<sup>1</sup>

In view of such claims, it is incumbent upon us to

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<sup>1</sup>PROGRESSIVE ORTHODOXY, Introduction, pp. 5-9. SMYTH, *Orthodoxy of To-Day*, Introduction. MUNGER, *Freedom of Faith*, The New Theology.

The objection urged somewhat vehemently against building up a theology from occasional texts, though deserving of some attention, may easily be carried too far. Those who oftenest urge it, as if the orthodox methods of attaining truth from the Scriptures were thoroughly vicious, or at least wholly inadequate, should themselves be well guarded against inconsistency at this point. For example, writers who can gravely quote the practical address of Zachariah (9: 11-12) to the people of Israel as prisoners of hope, waiting for deliverance through a coming Messiah, as if it were somehow connected with the spirits in prison referred to by Peter, or with the inhabitants of the intermediate state generally, ought to be slow in criticising a theology which has been structurally developing, century after century, through the careful and faithful study and utilizing of every suggestion or hint, every line or letter, found within the Divine Word.

inquire how far these new teachings are truly orthodox—how far they are in harmony with what is included generically under the phrase, Christian Theology. That phrase describes or indicates to us the vast body of truth concerning God and man, sin and salvation, which has during the ages originated and matured into form, not from a few texts here or there, but from the very body and substance of the Scriptures, and which has progressively expressed itself, not merely or even mainly in Christian symbolism, but much more extensively in the writings of learned men, in the utterances of ten thousand pulpits, and in the practical convictions of the great multitude of the faithful. This is not some particular type of theology, such as the Augustinian, the Lutheran, the Arminian; it is rather that great evangelical System of Doctrine, in whose grand, deep, celestial verities converted men of all schools and sects are more or less consciously agreed. Nor is this the theology of some past age, handed down to the present as if it were a dried and brittle crust of dogma—as one of these writers describes it—kept over, and without either life or power of growth; it is rather a living system at this hour, intelligently believed in and tenderly cherished by the Church of God, as embodying whatever is essential to biblical and saving Faith. Such is Christian theology—Christian orthodoxy. On the other hand, we see a specific dogma, pronounced by some of its advocates to be a mere opinion or conviction, of slight import in itself, and involving no consequences of importance to theology in general, but declared by others to be the foremost representative of a great forward movement in Christian thought which is destined to revolutionize current conceptions of doctrine at a hundred points, and whose ultimate issue is to be

a New Theology, radically unlike the Old, not merely in method and spirit, but also in the substantial truth which it shall incorporate and represent. What is the real relation of the dogma to the system? Is it the relation of the consummate blossom, ruddy and fragrant, to the rose whose matured life it has somehow caught and so wondrously embodied? Is it the relation of the subtle exhalation, dank and malarious, to the luxuriant soil which emits it as a poison in the night?

The careful tracing out of the particular influences and issues of the doctrine of a Salvation after Death, as here considered, would require much larger space and range of inquiry than are contemplated in the present discussion. What has been already said, will go far toward rendering less urgent such particular examination. For the rest, some further elucidation of points already in sight, together with some additional suggestions respecting certain theological connections and bearings of the dogma in question, will probably be all that is demanded by a discussion, whose aim is practical rather than speculative. Of necessity, even so cursory an inquiry will also involve some further exposition of the Christian doctrine itself as to those great realities for whose solution the hypothesis of a *post mortem* probation has been devised.

What is the relation between this hypothesis, and the Christian Theology concerning God?—Without reverting to what has been said respecting the divine character and ways, and the particular attributes of God such as love and justice, we may here contemplate Him simply in His two grand primordial relations to the race,—as the Moral Governor, and as the Father of mankind. Of

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and Moral Gov-  
ernment.

these, the moral government or administration of God, viewed as the fundamental fact and arrangement under which probation occurs, is naturally first:

It is as easily demonstrated that there is a moral order in the world, as that there is a physical order, ruling in material nature. Not only is there, in the vague and illusive phrase of Matthew Arnold, a power in the world, not ourselves, making for righteousness; we see further that this is a personal power, and a power working toward spiritual holiness as well as toward what Arnold terms righteousness. In other words, there is a moral as truly as a physical government in existence,—a government administered according to right and beneficent law, and ever tending in its administration toward the moral development and perfection of its subjects. And back of this government stands a Being, infinite in endowment and glorious in attribute, who by the necessities of his own holy nature is the Moral Ruler over mankind, not merely where the Gospel has been preached, but wherever moral personality in human form is found. These grand primal facts must be admitted by every one who has thoughtfully considered either the teachings of Scripture, or the suggestions of human experience. In a word, the fundamental and the sublime verity, underlying our entire earthly life as moral creatures, and giving significance to our acts and experiences here, is this Moral Government of God.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>“As the manifold appearances of design and of final causes, in the constitution of the world, prove it to be the work of an intelligent Mind, so the particular final causes of pleasure and pain distributed among his creatures, prove that they are under his government—what may be called his natural government of creatures endued with sense and reason.” BUTLER, *Analogy*, Part

The simplest and also the most generic conception of Probation is that which recognizes it as a transaction taking place under this comprehensive moral government,—the application of such a law and administration as have just been described, to the life of man, viewed as a moral being. For this government presupposes law, and the right and power to enforce law; it presupposes also the capacity for obedience, and for an obedience which is voluntary and cordial and spiritual; it presupposes in like manner full responsibility for the exercise of such freedom, and an account to be sooner or later rendered for every act, whether right or wrong, loyal or disobedient, under this divine administration. Hence probation is simply the divine testing of each and every soul as to its disposition toward moral law, and its conduct as measured by that law. On the side of man, it is the necessary, the inevitable

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1; Ch. 3. See also McCOSH, *Divine Government, Physical and Moral*, Book III.

It is not strange that the dogma here under discussion should have currency in Germany, or even in England, where inadequate views of the Moral Government of God are so common. One of the radical vices in the theology of Dörner, for example, lies in his low and scant perception of this great ordinating doctrine. The declension from the high position of Butler and his compeers on this doctrine, has been a most serious calamity to more recent English theology also. The corresponding decline in America from the lofty conceptions of Jonathan Edwards, as developed by his associates and immediate successors in New England, is likely to prove a calamity still more serious. See Hopkins, West, Bellamy, Emmons; DWIGHT, *Theology*, Sermons 25-26. Eminently TAYLOR, N. W., *The Moral Government of God*,—a treatise deserving the earnest study of all who desire to comprehend the great problem of Probation. Taylor defines moral government, with sufficient accuracy, as the influence of the authority of a moral governor over moral beings, designed so to control their action as to secure the great end of action on their part, through the medium of law.

outgrowth of his position as a creature possessing moral qualities, and a true freedom, in a constitution of things where law exists, and where God is so directing affairs that sin shall be arrested and punished, and that virtue shall receive approval and reward; BUTLER, Part I: Ch. iv-v.

In the nature of the case, therefore, such probation is universal as humanity: it belongs to man as man, and escape from it is impossible excepting through the forfeiture of those moral qualities on whose exercise it is based. Such probation may and does vary with the native endowments, with the external conditions, with the degree of light and knowledge, in each instance: it may be that, though the law and the authority remain the same, no two human beings from the beginning of time until now, have ever passed through precisely the same mode, cast, degree of probation. And beyond all these visible occasions of variation, we are bound also to recognize the fact, revealed alike in Scripture and in experience, that the sovereign election of God manifests itself here as elsewhere. There are variations among men as to the form, methods, instrumentalities, extent, persistence of this moral discipline and testing, which are wholly inexplicable to us, and which we must consent to leave entirely in the hands of Him by whom this solemn process is in every case conducted. There is no ground whatever for the claim so often suggested, that God is obligated to give to each and every human soul precisely the same form and amount of probation—any more than we may properly claim, that He is obligated to give to each and all precisely the same amount and form of temporal good. There is indeed no reason for supposing that any such exact equality would be as favorable to the adequate probation of the race, or of individual

souls, as the present divinely arranged inequality is. At this point we are bound simply to exercise the same general measure of confidence and trust which we cherish in the wisdom and equity and benevolence of God, in the presence of temporal inequalities. Rationalistic speculations about what God ought to do as to human probation, in order to be just and good according to our conceptions of justice and goodness, are of small moment in view of what we see Him actually doing in both His moral and His natural spheres of administration.

What has been said respecting the guilt and condemnation of the race prior to moral action, by no means controverts this doctrine of the universal probation of humanity. The terms, guilt and condemnation, as applied even to infants who have not yet entered upon moral activity, in virtue of their connection with a depraved race, must acquire a meaning far more positive and intense when applied to those who have become conscious of their estate under law—their duty and their freedom; and who have voluntarily transgressed law, and subjected themselves to personal accountability. This generic depravation may make the probationary process less favorable—may bring in new disqualifications, and cast its own deep shadows on the result: but it does not take away the necessity for such a process, neither does it arrest or prevent the process, in fact. The race though sinful, and each member of the race however depraved, is still in the broad sense here defined, under probation—the great issue of character, under the divine constitution of things, gradually taking on in each and all its fixed and irreversible shape.

We are thus justified in maintaining that probation is actually occurring, and occurring to all men and in



an infinite variety of conditions and forms, under a system of moral administration divinely ordained. The universal fact is that in some way or other, and to some extent or other, God is actually trying and testing every human being who has reached moral consciousness, as to the great alternatives of right or wrong, duty or pleasure, obedience or disloyalty to Him. To this conclusion the Bible as well as our own observation is constantly leading us. We need indeed no other biblical testimony than that presented in the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Roman Church. In this conclusive passage, those who had not the revealed law, are said to be a law unto themselves in virtue of their possession of reason and conscience and the revelations of nature, and were therefore to be tested and disciplined and judged according to that law. They are truthfully represented as capable of estimating their own actions as right or wrong, and are said to accuse or excuse one another, though they were living and acting under the dim twilight of nature. And the awful catalogue of sins which the apostle enumerates as properly chargeable against these pagan races, and which he sets forth as conclusive evidences of their guilt and the proper ground of their condemnation,<sup>1</sup> is of itself sufficient proof of an actual probation—a probation to which not only the heathen of that age, but all the heathen of all lands and ages, and all men in all conditions in life, and under every variety of training and opportunity, are subjected under the moral administration of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 1: 18. 2: 12. Acts 17: 30. 10: 35. Our Lord Himself in one of His epideictic conversations with the Pharisees, (Luke 12: 54-7) points to this natural discernment of the right, with its necessary consequent in responsibility, and makes it the basis of an earnest summons to duty.

To affirm, then, that the only legitimate or final form of probation for man is that which has its center in a conscious acceptance or rejection of Christ, is to broach, under cover of a great truth, what is in fact a serious error. It is true that this is the highest conceivable form of spiritual testing, but by no means true that it is the only form, or that all other forms must be prolonged until they somehow, somewhere, culminate in this. No speculative reasonings on the universality of Christ or of His religion can carry us to the point of affirming, that the final word of destiny can not justly be pronounced concerning any soul of man, until it has known the Savior and Him crucified. God may justly pronounce that final word in numberless cases where He sees precisely the same moral disposition developing itself along the lines of natural action—the same temper of selfishness, earthliness, transgression, which in the presence of the historic Christ would have broken out in unbelief or malignant opposition. And the probation may be as real and adequate in the one class of cases as in the other, though it would seem to us far less extensive: in the sight of God the great problem of character may be as thoroughly solved, as though the soul, condemned for its developed sinfulness in general, had been condemned before Him for an open rejection of His salvation.

Hence the inference that moral probation, as an experience of the race, in order to its proper completion or consummation, must be carried over into the intermediate state and prolonged indefinitely there, if the soul has not sufficiently learned of Christ and His salvation in the present life, is based on a large series of unwarranted assumptions. Nothing that we can learn from Scripture or from reason will justify the conclu-

sion, that God can not and does not know at the hour of death, just what are the moral disposition and tendencies of every adult soul that passes into eternity, whether from Christian or from pagan lands. And no evidence appears from any quarter to show that a decision reached by Him at that solemn hour, would be unjust or incomplete—unkind to the soul itself or any way unworthy of Him, irrespective of the question whether the departing soul had ever heard of Christ.

This view of the case may be made more clear, and more satisfying alike to thought and to feeling, if we turn for a moment to contemplate God in His other primordial relation to mankind—the relation of Fatherhood.—It is to be recognized as among the deepest and most precious truths of Scripture that God is our Father—the Father not only of believers, made such through grace, but of all mankind, and in virtue of their original creation in the divine image. No star that shines in the firmament of Revelation is more clear or glorious than this; no truth that ever dropped down upon our earth from the heaven where God dwells, is more full of preciousness. This fatherhood gives a meaning and a tenderness to this life of ours, which it would be midnight, be death, for us to lose. Beneath the shelter of that fatherhood even the pagan nations are abiding: our degenerate and prodigal race lives still, lives ever, under the eye, within the encircling arm of a Father.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CANDLISH, and also CRAWFORD, on the *Fatherhood of God*—specially on the question whether this fatherhood is gracious only, or natural also. See the Sermon on the Mount, for the full doctrine of natural fatherhood. The saints in glory bear the name of the Father written on their foreheads: Rev. 14: 1.

Nor is it needful to suppose that this relation, which embraces in its tenderness even the unthankful and the evil—which reveals itself in countless forms of compassion, long-suffering, patience, toward even those who have trifled long with Christ and His redemption, is limited in its manifestation to the present life. We can not doubt that the disembodied spirits of the just, dwelling in their intermediate condition, are as distinctly conscious as we can be, that God is their Father still, as He was while they tabernacled in the flesh. Their filial feeling survives through all the mutations which death may bring to them, and their hearts are filled as aforetime with loving gratitude to Him who there as truly as here makes manifest to them His paternal interest and care. Nor is it necessary to suppose that God ceases to be a Father to the myriads who die before they have known anything of Him on the earth, or even to those whom He is constrained for their personal sin to condemn and punish in the intermediate state. As on earth He doth not inflict willingly, but counts and weighs His chastisements and His discipline—never in passion striking one blow too many or striking too heavily, however guilty the sinner may be, so we may believe that in the intermediate life every stroke of retribution is carefully counted, every blow measured, each privation or punishment inflicted, by the same parental love. We have no warrant in Scripture or in reason for affirming that God ceases to be a Father to the lost, or that the sweet constraints of affection sustain no relation whatever to the retributions which He is constrained in equity to inflict. Rather is it not true, that the dark consciousness of having treated such parental tenderness and grace unworthily in this life, and the darker consciousness of

being still in willful rebellion against them, must ever constitute one of the sorest pangs in the spiritual torments of hell?

But the probation which we are here contemplating, occurs as truly under this universal fatherhood as under the comprehensive moral administration just considered. This personal discipline and testing to which the race is subject, are not instituted in sovereignty merely,—least of all are they the arbitrary decree and scheme of some cold, high, glittering, resistless power, more awful than that which whirls the planets through the skies. They are rather the tender appointments of One who, in the majesty of His administration, never forgets that He is our Father, and who has reasons, wise and good, for their institution. These reasons we are able, at least in part, to apprehend,—especially in so far as they are seen to be related to the development of right and holy character. So far as we can discover, this type of character can be produced in man only through such training and such testing as this. The great alternatives of right and wrong, of duty and pleasure, of obedience and transgression, of loyalty or disloyalty to God and His law, must somewhere be brought before each soul, so that it shall learn to exercise itself as a moral being possessing intelligence and conscience and the power of choice, in the presence of these august alternatives. From the first moment of moral consciousness, it must learn to concern itself with this clear, solemn, responsible election between living unto self or living unto God, under the consciousness that on that election its character and its destinies must turn. And it is the Divine Father as truly as the just Sovereign who sets his child in this position, and subjects it to this moral strain, with full knowledge of all

the possible contingencies and issues in each case. The decision which makes the present life to every soul of man a state of probation, is the decision of a Father, and of a Father who is seeking the moral development, the spiritual perfection, of His children through the only conceivable process, so far as our range of observation reaches, by which that result can be secured. Such a generic probation, in other words, is the inevitable correlative of the underlying fact and doctrine of the divine Fatherhood; so long as God is the Father of all men, and all men are his children, and as such under His moral nurture, it lies in the very nature of things that they should exist in this life, each and all, under the principle and the conditions of a true, a personal, an adequate probation.

Contemplating the whole matter in this light, our minds are measurably released from the perplexities which ordinarily seem to surround the theme. Setting ourselves in the calm frame of Butler, we are led to see with him that probation is a process, and the only available process, for the development of human character; and that the instituting of such a process, notwithstanding all the perils involved in it, is the act of a wise, holy, beneficent Deity whose aim is ever the moral cultivation and maturing of a race of creatures, fitted by nature to love and serve Him here and forever. Viewed in this aspect, the law in the case becomes the enactment of a good as well as equitable Being; the authority, and all the motives employed, are in harmony with His perfections; the administration is always paternal as well as imperial; and the obedience required is such as the human reason and conscience spontaneously confess to be right, and such as the highest welfare of the soul for time and for eternity demands.

Apparent severities change, as we contemplate them, into needful forms of discipline; inequalities in power, sphere, opportunity are justified, and retribution for all departure from the straight pathway of obedience stands out in clear, though lurid view as the necessary, even the eternal, accompaniment of such a probationary process. An element of what may be called grace is seen to mingle with this probation, not merely in the form of patience, or of delay in retribution, but even in the form of enlightenment and positive aid. Indeed, we know not how far God may go, in instructing and strengthening those who, in whatever land, or under whatever obscurations of sin, are seeking to do what is right in His sight. At every point in this process, the divine fatherhood sheds its own peculiar glow over the divine administration: love is everywhere, and everywhere love breathes in each recognized command, enforces each obligation on the conscience, and continually wins to the loyalty which the welfare of the soul and of the moral universe demands. As a mystery challenging the intellect, the problem of probation may still remain insoluble; but as an experience of the soul, probation in this light becomes a new sign and proof, and indeed the highest sign and proof attainable apart from the Gospel, of the presence and the care of a Father, always tender and beneficent toward all mankind.

Postponing for the moment the consideration of the practical outcome of this probationary process, thus divinely carried on in the heart and life of humanity, we may simply note the irreconcilable antithesis between this doctrine and the dogma here controverted. It is impossible for the advocates of that dogma to return to the old theologic position that the race stood its probation once for all in Adam, and, having fallen in him,

has no ability of any sort to consider again the claims of law or duty, or to obey God,—since such an admission would be fatal to its supposition that condemnation can come upon man only as the issue of his personal rejection of Christ. In opposition to that dictum of the older Calvinism, they are constrained no less than others to recognize the essential facts just considered respecting the truly probationary nature of the present life, and to maintain with later Christian orthodoxy that man though sinful, though depraved, is still under law and amenable to law,—is still acting in freedom and under a responsibility to God as real as that of Adam, for the manner in which he answers the vital question of obedience or transgression. But that admission is fatal to their favorite dogma, unless indeed it be alleged that this natural process of discipline and testing, though universal, is insufficient to form an adequate basis for the divine estimate of character and desert. And this is a conclusion for which it is impossible to find substantial warrant.

Without pausing here to make this view of the subject more manifest, we may profitably turn to consider further the relation between this cosmic probation experienced by the race, and the specific probation introduced through the Gospel.—It is certainly a low and false view of Christianity which regards it as one of the great natural religions merely, either evolved from antecedent and cruder types, or springing rudimentally from the stock of human nature.<sup>1</sup> Our holy faith, even in its patriarchal and Judaic forms, differs radically

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<sup>1</sup> CLARKE, *Ten Great Religions*. MAURICE, *Religions of the World*; and other works of this class.



from all these in being an essentially supernatural religion, introduced by direct volition of God into the experience of humanity, and there sustained, developed, propagated by methods that are more divine than human throughout. Yet at many points this supernatural faith reveals its living affiliations with all the varieties of spiritual belief and experience common to man as man, from the loftiest down to the lowest and grossest religion of nature. Christianity is not something entirely novel in the spiritual history of our world—a wholly new creation of Deity, joined on at no point to the earlier phases of that history, and in complete antagonism with all that man had hitherto known or felt respecting God and duty and immortality. Rather is it a grand consummating process, superinduced not through a mere evolution, but by an immediate movement of the Godhead, upon all that had preceded it,—just as the animal creation was directly superinduced by Him upon the vegetable, or as man was divinely brought in at last, to be the head and crown of all material nature.

Especially does this relationship become apparent, when we consider the connections of this divine religion with those broad cosmic processes of education and moral training, which have just been sketched in outline. Here we discern, on the one side, what may be styled a natural probation, beginning with our first parents, and realized in the life of every descendant from the Adamic stock,—a probation disturbed, arrested, frustrated at numberless points by the fall, and by the sinfulness of heart and nature which flowed out miasmatically from the fall; yet a probation still carried on, with its laws and authorities and motives, with its choices and testings, its benedictions and its guilt

and shame. But on the other side, we see a gracious probation, instituted even from the hour of the fall, developed through all the ages of Hebraism, and finally made complete under the Gospel—a probation in which no new issue is made, no radically different test applied, but rather in which all the preceding issues are concentrated around the person and mediation of Christ, and in which all antecedent tests are aggregated into the one specific, supreme test of acceptance or rejection of the salvation offered to men in Him. In essence and substance, the question which Christianity submits to that portion of the race which has heard of this salvation, is precisely the same question which is submitted to the race universally. The form of the question differs, the accessories are vastly increased in number and impressiveness, the personal Christ now stands in the center, the grace of God mingles perceptibly with the command, spiritual powers are promised to the submitting soul, and fresh realities, gathered from the eternal life, emphasize and solemnize the whole transaction. But the issue is the old issue, wide as the world and enduring as time—the issue of self or duty, sinfulness or obedience, Satan or God.

Two things especially characterize probation under the Gospel,—the personal Christ as the complete embodiment of the Deity, and the pledged grace and aid of the Holy Ghost. We believe that in the Incarnate Son we behold the full effulgence of the glorious God,—we see, in the phrase of Scripture, the very image of His substance, and receive His highest possible revelation to us respecting His character, His relations and claims upon us, and eminently His love and grace. We also believe that in the enlightening and quickening ministries of the Holy Spirit we behold the last and highest

exhibition of divine power, when energized by love,—we see the Deity in action along the lines which grace selects, and working out results greater far in kind than any miracle of nature, or even than creation itself. Hence it follows inevitably that he who has trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant of redemption an unholy thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10: 29) has failed at the very summit of probation, and in that failure has rendered it impossible, as the inspired writer to the Hebrews affirms, that he should ever be saved. For him there remain no more sacrifices for sins, no more winning views of mercy, no fresh energy from the skies moving him on to holiness; but only, even in this life, and certainly beyond it, in the intermediate life, a retribution that is utter, and for aught that we can see, is eternal.

How far this gracious probation may extend,—what persons and classes may be included within its operation, we are not competent absolutely to determine. To say that it is in no case final, but may be repeated hereafter in the instance even of the most obdurate and perverse,—or to say that the condemnation incurred under it applies only to a small class of men, heretics and unbelievers, the openly profligate and the thoroughly hardened, is to affirm what the New Testament nowhere warrants. Our Lord indeed, in answer to the tremulous question whether there be few that are saved, justifies the hope that with God much is possible that seems impossible to man. Yet it is from His own lips that we learn the awful lesson as to the full responsibility of all those who see or hear of Him, and it is His own voice that warns every sinner in Christendom to strive to enter into the strait gate of duty

and of peace. That the vast multitude of those who have lived in Christian lands, heard of Christ and His mediation, been invited to the Gospel feast, but who have gone their several ways, to farm and merchandise, in the temper of worldly indifference to the claims of God and the welfare of the soul, are included in this probation, and are fatally tested and condemned by it, can not well be doubted by any one who suitably weighs the words of the Lord Himself, or thoughtfully considers what the later inspired writers have combined to teach.<sup>1</sup>

Happily we are not called upon to pass judgment on any soul within the large domain of Christendom; it would indeed be impossible for us to say what, in the vision of God, constitutes for any such soul an adequate probation under this scheme of grace. The myriads who die early in their moral life, the myriads who live in squalor and moral ignorance, the myriads who are misled by bad influences or seduced by subtle error,—these vast multitudes who labor under such sad disabilities, who inhabit the dusky border land between Christianity and paganism, are so great, and their situation is so pitiful and perilous, that our hearts would be appalled at the problem of determining their relative accountability and guilt before God. We know simply that He who is subjecting them to this decisive spiritual test, is Himself a God of mercy, not willing that any should perish, but rather that all whom Christ and the Spirit can reach, shall be restored to holiness and to life everlasting. It may not indeed be practicable for us to adopt in full the ardent declaration of Faber: As to those who are lost, I confidently believe that our

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<sup>1</sup>Luke 13: 23-30. Matt. 7: 13-14, 19: 23-26. Also, Matt. 7: 24-29. John 5: 40, 3: 19. II Cor. 6: 2, and many others.

Heavenly Father threw His arms round each created spirit, and looked it full in the face with bright eyes of love, in the darkness of its mortal life, and that of its own deliberate will it would not have Him to be its God.<sup>1</sup> But we may go as far as our loving Lord leads us in such larger hope, so long as we do not sacrifice the great underlying truth that for every soul of all these multitudes, the present life is, must be, a state and the only state of gracious as well as natural probation, and therefore a state where the soul is decisively to be either saved or lost.

How far the dogma in question carries us, whether away from or beyond these biblical teachings, it is not difficult to see. The affirmation of Farrar, for illustration, that all sin but the sin against the Holy Ghost may be forgiven hereafter, and that no one knows what that sin is, or whether any one is committing it, is utterly at variance with this doctrine of a gracious probation conterminous with the Gospel. And all tendency to minify the reality or the immediateness of this probation, by reducing the number of those living under it, by emphasizing the difficulties in the way of its application, by urging perplexing queries or objections, or by subtracting in any manner from the plain facts just as they stand in the Bible and in the experience of the world, so far as the world has been brought under the light of the Gospel, are amenable to the same charge substantially. The perils involved in such processes

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<sup>1</sup>FABER, *The Creator and the Creature*. It is another striking remark of this author, quoted by Pusey, that hell has sent into heaven more than half as many souls as it contains itself. Hell is certainly a great and needful deterrent; and there is vast force, notwithstanding the famous taunt of John Stuart Mill, in the old aphorism, that the fear of hell peoples heaven.

are very great, especially when they are carried forward in the presence of multitudes who are only too willing to welcome any subterfuge, however frail, that may relieve them from the responsibility of an immediate acceptance or rejection of Christ. At this point, the hypothesis of a *post mortem* probation becomes a delusion and a snare throughout. Its extensive enunciation and acceptance could only weaken the present appeals and claims of the Gospel, and beguile men by myriads into a postponement of these claims and appeals to some anticipated day of grace that will never dawn.

Turning at this point from the contemplation of the divine relations to man, natural and gracious, into the department of Anthropology, we are at once confronted by other marked antagonisms between Christian orthodoxy and the dogma in question.—That a seriously defective if not false theory of human nature, especially as depraved and sinful, underlies this dogma, will not be questioned by those who have noted the spontaneous vigor with which its supporters assail every feature of that Pauline doctrine of man, which under various names, in defiance of ten thousand protests, still maintains its place within the Christian Church, and particularly within the domain of evangelic Protestantism.<sup>1</sup> Without entering upon any general discussion

V. Probation and Guilt; Probation and Judgment.

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<sup>1</sup>It is sufficient to quote the declaration of Plumptre, adopted with admiration by Farrar, that the gloom which settled upon the Western Church from the dark shadow of Augustine, and which—as Farrar alleges—was changed into the blackness of midnight by the dogmas of Calvin, must all be swept away before the morning of the New Theology can fairly break upon our vision. A

of this theory of human nature, we may simply note again, in a final glance, its specific bearing on the question before us, at two practical points—guilt and judgment:

It is a misfortune to Christian theology that the term, guilt—*culpa* as distinct from *vitium*—should be employed in so many varying connections, and with such shiftings and shadings of significance. In its primary and main sense, the term always implies, to quote the definition of Blackstone, the concurrence of the personal will, where it has the choice either to do or not to do the act or deed in question,—this concurrence being the only thing which renders the act or deed blameworthy. It is at this point that personal criminality, amenability to law, culpability, are most distinctly seen—as exhibited immediately in action. But if now we turn from the specific act, to consider the moral nature or disposition from which the act springs—that state of will in which the particular choice or concurrence has its origin, we are in some true sense justified in again affirming guiltiness as a characteristic of this disposition or nature also. There is, we at once perceive, a sinfulness which is deeper than the sinning—an enduring condition of the soul to which, so far at least as that condition is seen to be the result of antecedent choices and acts, constituting together what we may call its moral nature and history, we are justified in applying the term, guilt.

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distinguished American advocate, with docile imitation, tells us that every trace of the Augustinian solution of the problem of sin must be swept out of the belief of the Church, before the doctrine of salvation after death can gain just acceptance. And another bluntly declares that belief in human depravity, as that doctrine is now formulated in current theology, is simply impossible—impossible of course to him.

But besides these primary meanings, there are also certain secondary senses attaching in ordinary usage to this term. As the result of what Edwards has described as the divine constitution of things, there is established such an organic connection of soul with soul, such solidarity and unity of the race, that the retributive results of wrong action in one person are continually flowing over upon others, and this in ever widening ranges and circles of experience, to such an extent that, even from the beginning of human activity in Eden down to the present hour, a certain guiltiness, a certain penal or retributive element, has, as all Christendom confesses, penetrated and pervaded the history of mankind. Under this constitution of things each soul has come to be participant, not merely of the nature and disposition thus developed in the race, but also of what may be termed the criminality or amenability to violated law, under which the race has rested from the period of the Adamic transgression and fall. In other words, the principle of retribution, wrought into life universally, in consequence of the first criminal act—the first failure in natural probation, has in fact reached all mankind, and in a secondary sense of that term has brought all mankind under guilt in the sight of God. Whatever may be our theory or explanation, our criticism or our opposition to the fact, the obvious reality is that He does thus regard and treat the race in its unity as if it were a sinful and a guilty race—contemplates it and deals with it as not only amenable to law, but culpable in the eye of law, and therefore properly subject to the retributive issues consequent upon such a state and relation. How in fact, in virtue of his position as Moral Governor or as their Father, could He regard and treat mankind otherwise—so long



as mankind are thus constituted, knit together, unified as a race?

Still it is obvious that the guiltiness which in these various senses, but chiefly in those which have been described as primary, attaches to humanity, and specifically to each soul that has reached the stage of accountability, must vary very widely in form, degree, intensity. In the sight of God, the guilt of the infant, born into this retributive system, and entering on life under the dark experiences of what in some sense is penalty, is very different from the guilt that descends as an instant and awful shadow on the head of the voluntary offender against divine law. So the guilt of the pagan, whose probation has been natural only, differs quite as much from that of one who has passed through a gracious probation under the Gospel, and has died reviling and rejecting Christ. Grouping mankind in classes, even our dim vision discovers at once the necessity for most careful discrimination in our imputation of guilt; and, though we may be wholly unable to exercise it, the same necessity exists equally in the case of each individual soul—each and every sinner, young or old, weak or strong, enlightened or ignorant, civilized or savage. To speak of guilt, therefore, in an indiscriminating way, as if all souls were alike guilty, or guilty in the same sense, and as such were dealt with in their experience of the penal issues of sin, in precisely the same way, without any regard for these broad diversities, is both technically and practically a very grave mistake. We have indeed no better common term than guilt, but no theological term is more often misleading, and none requires greater discernment in its use, especially in its relations to what we have just been contemplating under the name of probation.

It follows from these suggestions respecting guilt, that there must be a divine judgment consequent upon this moral experience, and that this judgment must also correspond in both nature and range with the guiltiness which is its occasion and ground. A probation which has no terminus whatever, is no probation: the conception is indeed a contradiction in terms. So, a probation which should go on indefinitely until all who are brought under it, are translated from sin to obedience and holiness, would rather be an educational process simply,—it would be radically defective in those tests of temper, disposition, moral purpose, which the term probation necessarily implies. But if, from the nature of the case, probation must terminate somewhere, is it not obvious further, that He who has instituted this probationary process both natural and gracious, is the only Being in the universe who is competent to determine just how far this process should in any case be carried, what forms it should assume, or at what hour it should end, and the retribution contemplated in the event of failure should begin? The final judgment, as well as all the process leading to it, is in His hands alone, and by Him in His own time and way the ultimate adjudication must be made. His will began, His will closes, the great transaction.

Is it not a serious, though very frequent mistake to contemplate this judgment of God, in connection with our probation, as wholly an event of the future? The fact rather is, that a certain shadow of guilt and of condemnation rests continually upon the race, and upon each member of the race, in virtue of the Adamic fault, taken together with the moral deterioration consequent upon that fatal source of all our woes. But more specifically, every instant of moral testing in the case of

each adult, whether in pagan or in Christian lands—every wrong choice or act originating in the temper of selfishness, every call of the Word or the Spirit—is also an instant of judgment, immediate, searching, momentous. There is, in fact, no moment in our moral life when we are not under, not merely the scrutinizing eye, but also the faithful adjudication of our God. He not only shapes each test for us, and notes our action in view of it: He also pronounces His verdict on each act, and on the moral disposition beneath it. What we more often contemplate as His judgment, at the end of each life, or at the final day of account, is but the summing up of an adjudication which began to frame itself at the first instant when the consciousness of our moral nature and destiny broke upon us as a revelation from the skies.

These brief hints respecting the nature of guilt and of judgment, taken in conjunction with what has been previously suggested, may suffice to make clear the erroneous quality, at this point as at others, of the dogma of a probation after death. Waiving for the moment the case of the heathen and of infants, we may at a glance see in various lights the error lying in that dogma, so far as geographic Christendom and its vast multitudes are concerned. Is there for these multitudes no guilt meriting the divine disapproval, except the guilt involved in a conscious, positive, persistent rejection of Christ? Is there no culpability in them short of this,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Dorner, as we have already seen, stands squarely on the heresy that the sins which men commit in an estate of ignorance respecting Christ, are not sufficient to prove them guilty before God, and protests (*Theol.*, § 130: A) against the iniquity of their condemnation on any such ground. Julius Müller, with a far deeper sense than Dorner, of the magnitude of the problem, admits (*Doctrine of Sin: Conclusion.*) that the possibility of damnation is grounded in

which demands the condemnation of a holy God? Has the law proclaimed at Sinai no claims that lie back of the Gospel, and no verdict to pronounce on those who violate its requirements? Is damnable sin always specific—always centered about Christ and His salvation? And is not God, in fact, judging every soul day by day, and judging each in righteousness according to the deeds done in the body, and with a steadfast reference to some consummating adjudication? And finally, has He not entirely in His own hands the question when His testing and scrutiny of each soul shall cease, and when the day of harvest, the summer of grace, shall be judicially declared to be ended? And if He affirms that the probation experienced by these multitudes in this life is sufficient for their proper testing in His sight, and faithfully and tenderly warns them against all neglect and all postponement on this ground, is it not a dreadful departure from the truth to encourage even a single soul among them to hope for another opportunity, in another state of being than this?

Accepting on these grounds the doctrine held by Christian orthodoxy respecting the single and final probation in this life of all who live within the domain of Christendom, and who have in any proper sense known of Christ and His salvation, we may now turn to con-

**VI. Probation  
and the Heathen  
World.**

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the personal freedom of the creature, and confesses the solemn fact that men as sinners are lost already, apart from their relations to the historic Christ. In the sight of Paul, the world was not simply in danger of lapsing, through the rejection of the offer of grace, into a state of guilt: he rather contemplated it as already in the eye of God a guilty world. Even the tender John describes that world as lying in wickedness—lying now in the embrace of the Wicked One. Luke 19: 10. Rom. 3: 19. I. John 5: 19.

sider somewhat further the spiritual estate of the other two great classes specially held up before us by the advocates of another probation to be granted after death. Of these two classes, the first is the unevangelized or pagan world:

Here we are confronted by a series of facts which no one can justly challenge, but which no thoughtful mind can contemplate without most serious concern. Receiving the Bible record as true, we are assured that, at least during the period just preceding the deluge, if not for antecedent centuries, the majority of mankind were in a state both of spiritual ignorance and of practical disobedience against God. As society forms again after the deluge, we discern the same awful fact revealing itself in human history; the multitude is seen to be still ignorant and disobedient, while here and there a pious soul, a holy family, appears in high contrast with the prevalent ungodliness. Down to the advent, the Bible is little else than a dark biography of sin—sin in ten thousand varieties, and in growing and more and more appalling forms. The New Testament opens with a new, and even more intense and solemn, declaration of the universal sinfulness; all the world, Gentile as truly as Hebrew, being, as both psalmist and apostle declare, verily guilty before God. Nor is there anything in Greek or Latin, in Asiatic or African history, which in the least disproves the terrific charge brought against humanity in the opening chapters of the Pauline letter to the Roman Church. So, through all the subsequent centuries, the majority of the race thus far have lived and have died in ignorance and in disobedience, more or less conscious, more or less positive and damnatory. And looking abroad over the world at this hour, after these eighteen Christian centuries have passed,

the melancholy fact still confronts us, that the majority of mankind are not merely ignorant of the Gospel, but are indifferent to the law written in their own consciences, and disobedient to the light and the teaching they have—wandering on through time without God, and without hope in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Again, further study alike of Scripture and of human nature brings out into awful distinctness a correlated series of facts as to the divine relations to such a race. We dare not say that God feels no interest in the moral estate of humanity, or that He rather than man is at fault here, or that man is more unfortunate than guilty, or that such guiltiness is unimportant in the divine estimation, or that no retribution will follow upon such a condition of things. Not only does the Bible pronounce such explanations false: the human reason spontaneously recognizes the guiltiness and peril of such an estate, and conscientiously condemns the very race which the human heart instinctively pities and tries to shield. Not only does the sinfulness exist, and exist through human choice, and in defiance of all divine dissuasives from evil and incentives to duty. Natural theology has also established the position, that retribution is an inevitable consequence of this moral condition, and that such retribution does not terminate with time, but rather runs on and on—for aught that reason knows, endlessly—in the future state.<sup>2</sup> In fact, such retribution has already begun, and is now divinely carried forward, and carried forward on the only possible basis—the basis of recognized sinfulness and guilt. We are not

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<sup>1</sup>SHEDD, *Sermons to the Natural Man*; especially the discourse on the theme, All Mankind Guilty.

<sup>2</sup>JACKSON, *The Doctrine of Retribution*, viewed as a truth of Natural Theology; BUTLER, *Analogy*, passim.

contemplating a race in danger of condemnation merely, but rather a race already condemned and already undergoing not merely misery, but punishment. And what the witness of human reason and experience is thus constantly affirming, the voice of Scripture, uttered with ever increasing emphasis as the sacred roll of Revelation is progressively unfolded, fully corroborates. That the pagan world is not only guilty, but condemned, and in some deep sense under the wrath of God, is its unvarying declaration; and if anything could add emphasis to that declaration, it is the fact that we receive this solemn doctrine most directly, most impressively, from Him who, more than any other, knew what was in man, and who came, as He himself says, not to rescue an unfortunate race from some future exposure to guilt and wrath, but to save a race already lost.

At this point let us call once more to mind the two interpreting facts already noted,—that the sin against the Holy Ghost is not some special kind of sin, carrying with it a peculiar species of guiltiness, but is rather the culminating variety of a sinfulness which may exist in the breast of a child or of a savage,—and also that human probation is not limited to the single and distinct issue of accepting the historic Christ, but rather may be, and doubtless is, carried on in adequate degree in the case of myriads who have never heard of Jesus of Nazareth, but who are facing precisely the same spiritual issue in forms less distinct and incisive. With these interpreting facts before us, to what other conclusion can we come than the one just stated, that sinfulness and guiltiness are as properly affirmed, just as the Word of God solemnly affirms them, of the heathen world, as they are properly affirmed, though in differing degree, of the partly Christianized races? In view of

the facts, what can we say, except that condemnation rests already upon the pagan as truly as on him who has rejected the historic salvation, and that God is even now dealing retributively with the one, as with the other? And in this light, how can it be claimed that there is need of another probation somewhere beyond the present life, in which the moral quality of the pagan races shall be still further tested, and on whose basis they shall then, on their distinct rejection of the historic Christ, be for the first time convicted and condemned?

While maintaining this general position, as we are bound to do so long as Scripture stands, and so long as these confirmations of Scripture are found in the conscience and the moral experiences of mankind, we are by no means required to ignore the immense moral difference which in fact exists between those who have rejected God as offered to them in nature, and certified in their reason and natural convictions, and those who have also committed the higher sin of spurning the Gospel and the love of God in Christ. The biblical fact is that, while all are included properly in the common term, sinners, the extent, the breadth, the heinousness of the sin in the two classes must in the sight of a just God vary widely—more widely than we can well conceive. The parable of our Lord touching the servant who was beaten with many, and the servant who was beaten with few stripes, suggests the underlying truth that there were correspondent degrees in guiltiness and desert by which this variation in punishment was divinely measured. Nor is there any reason why this truth, with whatever of consolation it may bring, should not be applied by us as broadly as the great correlative truth of universal sinfulness. The variation is as es-



essential to a properly balanced biblical conception, as the unity which underlies and sustains it.

The question whether any among the heathen are saved—saved through their cordial recognition of the claims of God, and their humble commitment of themselves to His mercy, so far as His existence, relationship, mercy have been manifested to them, is one in which Christian hope may find large and legitimate field for practical exercise. We may not safely affirm with Zwingli in his address to the French king, that there has been no good man—*vir bonus*—who is not also a sanctified mind—*mens sancta*; neither any faithful soul—*fidelis anima*—which shall not see God. Yet, so long as we do not deviate from the cardinal doctrine of sinfulness, and the need of heavenly grace in order to a true regeneration and salvation, we are in little danger of hoping more widely, more ardently, than the living Word permits. The multitudes whom the great Swiss reformer anticipated seeing in the celestial life, may by the large grace of God bringing them to repentance and obedience during their earthly pilgrimage, possibly attain with us to that beatific home. At least, that God will not condemn our loving hope in their behalf.

Nor is it inconsistent with loyalty to the Word of God, if we recognize more fully than is common in evangelical circles, the broad distinctions which doubtless appear in the retributions of eternity. What our Lord himself teaches respecting these retributions, justifies not merely the belief that every stroke is carefully measured, and is administered as much with parental considerateness as with unflinching equity. It justifies the further belief that there are variations and grades in retribution, which correspond exactly with the earthly gradations in sinfulness, and with the particular meas-

ure of guilt incurred by each separate soul. Hence the awful phrases of Scripture, the wrath of God, the outer darkness, the lake of fire, hell, damnation, though unvarying in their essential quality, should be interpreted always in full view of such variations. We are to guard against such use even of the generic term, Lost, as would imply that it always contains precisely the same degree of significance. The lost cities of the plain, for example, were not lost in the estimate of Christ, as were the lost of the generation which had seen Him and heard His messages of mercy; neither were these lost in the same sense and measure in which He doubtless regards those as lost, who in these latter days have received the complete Gospel, and in willfulness and unbelief have rejected it, once and forever.

We may therefore believe that the punishment of the heathen races whose future fate we are contemplating, will not be out of just proportion with their measure of light, of capacity, of moral maturity. We may be sure that it will never be in excess of what a God, both just and tender, judges to be comparatively due them. Nor is it impossible that this punishment may be as much privative as positive,—having its closest analogue in that *limbus infantum* where, according to the Church of Rome, unbaptized infants are placed, not indeed in the beneficent presence of God, yet not suffering those direct inflictions of His holy wrath to which adult transgressors are exposed. May not these condemned pagan races dwell apart from the glory of God, as in other stars, with wider and slower revolutions and chillier airs, less blessed with the sunshine and dear vitalities of the Deity, and so living on from age to age a lower life, far away from the peculiar benignities of heaven—lost, in the sense that they are forever unsaved,

and are forever in some true sense under condemnation? While indeed, in view of the scant references of the Scripture, we can not speculate largely respecting such a problem, it certainly involves no sacrifice of any essential element of the doctrine of retribution as taught in Scripture, if we lay large stress on these differences in guiltiness, and anticipate like differences in the retributive experience of the myriads who inhabit whatever orb in that dark universe—the universe of the Lost.

The other class whose spiritual need is introduced in special justification of the dogma of *post mortem* probation, is the infant world,—that large proportion, probably a distinct majority of the human race, who in the providence of God are borne into the intermediate state before reaching the age of conscious accountability. That the problem respecting their condition and fate is one of vast theologic as well as practical moment, will not be questioned. That the solution proposed through the dogma in question, is without warrant in Scripture and altogether inadequate theologically, can be made apparent.

Here we may at the outset profitably recall the state of the doctrine respecting deceased infants, as it is now presented to Christian thought. As we have seen, the necessity for serious consideration of the grave problem involved, and for some Christian solution, first manifested itself in the Roman Catholic dogma of a *limbus infantum*,—a place for all unbaptized infants not of positive punishment, but rather of privation,—a place in which existence is passed not unhappily, though without that sanctification and that bliss which salva-

tion through Christ brings to all baptized children. The same necessity compelled the Synod of Dort, and afterward the Westminster Assembly, to advance to the more positive position that all elect infants, whether baptized or unbaptized, were not placed as Catholicism had affirmed, in such an inferior condition—neither saved nor lost except in a negative sense,—but rather were actually saved through Christ by the Spirit, and admitted into the full felicities of the heavenly state. This was probably as high and large a view as the Protestantism of the seventeenth, or even of the eighteenth century, was able to take; and while we may regard it as seriously defective in its limitations, we ought to acknowledge that it was still a vast advance upon all that had preceded it in Christian thought. The nineteenth century has witnessed a much larger advance to the general doctrine, now almost universally held by Protestants, that through Christ, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, all infants dying in infancy are to be counted among the elect, are saved directly from sin and its curse, and are immediately admitted into heaven. And this proposition is now regarded, at least by many minds, as including not merely children born in Christian lands, but also those who are born in paganism,—in the aggregate, as statistics show, a majority of all who die, the world over.

The scriptural foundations of this extensive hope are readily stated: they are concentrated chiefly in the words and the acts of the Messiah. When our Lord took little children in his arms and blessed them—when He recognized the peculiar worth of the childlike temper, and commended it to his disciples as of the essence of religion—when He declared directly that of such is the kingdom of heaven, and that their angels are

always permitted, as if they were specially welcome visitors, to behold the face of His Father, He certainly furnished distinct foundation for a large hope as to the salvation of all such dying in infancy. Some apostolic references to the estate of children under the economy of the Gospel, and the apostolic injunctions and encouragement in the training of such little ones for Christ, point strongly in the same direction.<sup>1</sup> And if we add to these the divine teaching already noted with regard to the extent and efficacy of the plan of mercy, and to the mighty and pervasive potencies of the Holy Ghost, and the unwillingness of the Father that any should perish, together with the prevalent doctrine of the older Scriptures as to the moral condition and possibilities of childhood, we surely are justified in claiming a large degree of biblical warrant for the comforting hope just described.

Nor is the fact that Christian thought has but recently reached this conclusion, a decisive argument against the doctrine as now maintained. For we have here an instance of the same legitimate process of development from the biblical germ, as that through which the evangelical doctrine of justification by faith, for example, came forth into full view at the Reformation, and established itself by sure deduction from the Scriptures as a fixed and central article of the Christian System. Another illustration appears in the current belief of all evangelical bodies as to the nature, the extent, the imperativeness of the work of missions, both at home and in pagan lands. What we here see is, in fact, another instance of that true, as distinguished from all false evolution of Christian doctrine, which, without depart-

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<sup>1</sup>Matt. 19: 13-15. 18: 1-6, 10. Mark 10: 15. Eph. 6: 1-4. 1 Cor. 7: 14; also numerous O. T. declarations.

ing from or going beyond the clear teaching of the Word itself, has enriched Christian belief at many other points.<sup>1</sup> Such a conviction as this, thus growing up in the mind of the Church through careful study of the Bible, should be regarded as something more than a pious hope. We claim for it, not merely that it is a permissible opinion, having its foundations in general reason or feeling apart from Scripture, and not contradictory to the Bible, but rather that it is a truth eminently consonant with Scripture, and strongly justified by the biblical teaching and spirit. The reason for the comparative silence of the Word of God respecting childhood doubtless lies in the fact that the Bible deals chiefly with adult minds, personally capable of receiving its teachings, and personally responsible for the use they make of what it reveals. But amid this relative silence we hear at least one Divine Voice, full of grace and comfort, proclaiming a gracious message, which the heart of humanity, so far as sanctified, is ever ready to hear: Suffer the little children to come unto Me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.

It is objected to this belief that it ignores the fact that salvation comes through faith, intelligent and voluntary—such faith being the only possible germ of sanctified character: and consequently that infants who pass through no such experience in this life, must pass through it in the intermediate state before they can be saved. Is this objection legitimate? Does it not involve far too narrow a conception of what the term, salvation by Christ, may contain? Does it not involve also an unwarrantable limitation of the loving potentialities of the Spirit, who, in the phrase of the West-

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<sup>1</sup> RAINY, *Delivery and Development of Christian Doctrine*.

minster Confession, worketh when and where and how He pleaseth? Who can tell what may be wrought at the instant of death, in the case of all infants, by the combined energies of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost? May we not, in view of what we actually know as to the potencies of grace, justly hold rather, that these redeemed and sanctified souls, entering into their first conscious moral existence under such conditions and in such a sphere as heaven, have no need either of such further discipline as the term, probation, implies, or of such culture in faith as the objection presumes? The great verity to which the Christian Church of our time is clinging shuts out both of these suppositions: it is summed up in the comprehensive proposition that, by a process deeper than conscious volition, and antecedent to all moral choices, the state of all infants dying in infancy is from the moment of death divinely determined, so that they are truly saved before responsible action commences, and their new life is from the first, not one of testing with a possible fall or failure, but one of holiness instant and above all change.

The superiority of this belief to the view advocated by the New Theology has already been noted. Instead of providing for dying infants an opportunity merely for salvation, under conditions unknown to us, and after a period of development sufficiently prolonged to bring their minds into a condition where they can deliberately judge for themselves in eternity as to Christ and His claims, is it not better to believe with evangelical Christendom generally, that their young eyes open at once toward Him, and their hearts respond in holy affection with the first dawning of their sanctified consciousness? Is it not a grander and worthier concep-

tion that, whether born of Christian or of unbelieving or even pagan parentage, such infants are graciously delivered at death from all corruption of heart or nature, are biased toward holiness as our first parents originally were, and from the outset are led forth into the immortal life as sanctified souls, to be divinely trained by processes unknown to us into perfection of character like that of Christ Himself? Certainly such a belief has a much larger basis of Scripture to rest upon than the dogma standing over against it, is far more in harmony with the nature of the Gospel, sheds a higher glory on the scheme of salvation, and commends itself much more fully to Christian feeling and desire. Nor is it a small testimonial in favor of this belief, that the training and development of the young in this life, within the nurture of the family, exhibit so many illustrations of a similar process,—a process in which mind and opinion are formed, principles are fixed, dispositions and character are largely determined, long before the period of personal, deliberate choice begins. And may there not be ground for the judgment, that one essential reason in the Divine Mind for the translation of half the human race into another life before sin has become an active power within the soul, may be that there the salutary processes of grace may be hastened, and holy character be produced at once, under conditions a thousandfold more favorable than even the earthly home of the most faithful Christian parent can afford?

These glances at the theological relations of the dogma in question, although specific and cursory merely, will be sufficient to show that, in respect to the character and relations of God, to the true nature and guilt and



condemnation of man apart from the Gospel, and to the reach and application of the salvation provided for humanity in Christ, this dogma deviates widely from the straight and broad path of Christian orthodoxy.—The claim that it is simply a legitimate and a necessary evolution from the fundamental principles of such orthodoxy—a progressive development from the old historic stock,<sup>1</sup> can not possibly be sustained. To set it forth, for example, as a legitimate deduction from the evangelical proposition, that in some true and deep sense Christ died for all men, not the elect only, is an obvious error, since His death for the world by no means proves that the entire race will be saved through Him either here or hereafter. Nor is there any other specific doctrine, current under the name of orthodoxy, of which this theory can be shown to be a direct inference—a justifiable expansion. As we have seen, it is rather a clear divergence, and that at many fundamental points, from that generic Christian Theology in which the whole Church of God is practically agreed as containing the substance of the doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. We find it to be in essence a return, along certain speculative lines, to an old heresy of the third and fourth centuries—a heresy never recognized in any church symbol, and never extensively received in either earlier or later times, and whose chief representative was distinctly classed by a conspicuous General Council with Arius and Nestorius, Apollinaris and Eutyches, as a teacher worthy not of credence, but of reprobation.

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<sup>1</sup>SMYTH, NEWMAN, *Old Faiths in New Lights*; Preface to revised edition.—One can never cease from wondering how men who are openly at variance with the Old Faith on points as vital as divine sovereignty, human depravity, the atonement, judgment and retribution, should still claim to be the legitimate, and indeed the only legitimate, heirs of all the Christian ages.

More specifically, the advocates of this dogma can by no possibility hold intelligently, and with full insight into the logical inferences and issues of their position, the current faith of evangelical Christendom as to the attributes and character of God, and His relations to mankind as moral Governor and Father—as to the fact and nature of moral sovereignty and government, and the universality and adequacy of probation—as to the mission of Christ, His relationship to the human race, His vicarious atonement for man, and the nature and scope of the religion which He came to establish,—as to the real depravity of man, his consequent guiltiness and need, and the necessity for his salvation in this life,—as to the true nature and range of salvation, and to its application amid the unknown experiences and conditions of the intermediate state. The divergence of the dogma from existing orthodoxy at all these points, and at others, is already distinct and positive; and the more faithfully the dogma is developed theologically,—the more thoroughly it is studied and applied in its various implications and tendencies, the more distinct and positive, and the more destructive also, will this divergence appear.

It not infrequently happens that Christian men, falling on a superficial survey into an inadvertent acceptance of some given proposition or theory, as substantially orthodox, find on closer and more comprehensive inspection, that the theory or proposition once admitted, carries them on involuntarily to results which they clearly see to be at variance with the accepted faith, and against which their maturer judgment therefore revolts. The broader testing of the proposed opinion reveals its incompleteness, its inadequacy, its injurious quality, as no narrower contemplation could

ever do; and in the presence of Christian Theology comprehensively regarded, the dogma—as in this instance—vanishes from sight.

But if any one should find himself insufficiently versed in the technics of theology to discern this doctrinal antagonism, another form of the same test is open to him—a form which better than any other proves the real value of any and all doctrine, dogma, theory, opinion, touching divine things,—the test of experiment. What would be the effect of this theory, if it were universally received by the Church of Christ? What would be the influence of its ecumenical proclamation from the pulpit, and through the press? What sort of impression would it make upon that great task of home evangelization, in which Christian people of all denominations are now so earnestly engaging? What result would flow from its practical adoption by all missionaries from Gospel lands, now employed in carrying the message of a present salvation around the globe? What would this dogma do, if it were fully matured in form, were inwrought into the Christian symbols, were substituted everywhere for the existing belief, were made the grand regulative principle and guide of the Church in her endeavor to execute the final command of the Master to disciple all nations, and so to bring in among men, the wide world over, the promised Kingdom of Heaven?

## CHAPTER VI.

### *THE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE.*

ONE other test of the dogma in question remains to be considered,—that which is supplied in various forms by what in general may be defined as Christian Experience. One prominent variety of this mode of testing the validity of this dogma, comes into view in the ardent appeal made in its behalf to the testimony of the regenerate or Christian consciousness, contemplated as a standard of belief. Another may be seen in the kindred appeal based on the alleged support of the dogma by the religious feelings—by certain varieties of Christian sentiment, which are supposed to require its acceptance as an article of faith. Still another appears in the comprehensive appeal to the moral disposition or spiritual inclinations of men—to the voluntary attitude or state of the sanctified soul with reference to these solemn problems touching the future life. In some cases, these are concentrated more or less distinctly into what is described as an appeal to human nature or human life, as if the true standard or measure of religious belief were somehow to be found in man or in humanity, rather than in theologies or church symbols, or even in what the Bible, regarded as an objective revelation, may seem to teach.

In view of such affirmations, it becomes important to consider at least in outline the character and the value of the argument thus derived from the field of Christian Experience in whatever variety; first, to in-

quire briefly into the nature and authoritativeness of the regenerate consciousness, as a witness to truth and a standard of religious belief,—then to examine and weigh these appeals to our religious feelings, with a view to some discriminating judgment respecting the proper office and value of such feelings as guides in the ascertainment of saving doctrine,—and finally to scrutinize somewhat carefully the assumed place and function of the moral disposition, of the composite personality in man or in mankind, in determining what ought or ought not to be believed on such a question as that under discussion. Obviously no small part of the argument for a *post mortem* salvation has been gathered up within this wide and somewhat vague field. Its advocates are continually declaring, for example, that whatever the creeds or the theologians may teach, the illuminated consciousness of the Church is certifying to the essential accuracy of their favorite dogma. The best spiritual feeling of the age, they openly claim, is already arraying itself on their side, and is certain ultimately to settle the question at issue by a process more decisive than logic—more authoritative even than biblical exegesis. The world, they assure us, is outgrowing the old belief, and is demanding with an imperativeness that can not be resisted, their better and higher doctrine: the moral nature in man, humanity and life, all even now are compelling the Church to a decisive change in her belief and her teaching in the direction of universal or nearly universal salvation. Such is the continuous and confident affirmation. What value really attaches to such claims, and what response does this form of argument require?

At this point, it is indispensable, first of all, to draw a broad and sharp line between reasonings derived from

the consciousness or feelings or disposition of the natural man, and reasonings derived from the distinct and specific field of Christian experience. For certainly, no thoughtful mind can commit such a question as that under consideration to the adjudication of the natural man—to the decision of the unsanctified intellect or of the unrenewed heart. That the Gospel revealed in Christ is, in its doctrines as truly as in its requirements, at variance at almost every essential point with the corrupted moral nature of humanity, is an axiom which needs no proof here. More specifically, the question whether there shall be any probation, or what shall be the nature or the issues of probation, or when and how God shall punish sin and unbelief, is one which Christianity can not for a moment surrender to the arbitration of the sinner himself. No inference whatever can be drawn from his opinion or feelings or disposition toward any doctrine on this subject, unless it be the double inference that whatever opinion the natural heart is inclined to hold, is therefore to be viewed as doubtful, and that the teaching against which that heart is in a chronic state of revolt, is probably the very truth of God.

Carefully ruling out therefore all reasonings or judgments respecting a Gospel after death which spring in whatever subtle form from the unregenerate nature in man, we also note still further that the type of argument here to be considered, though wholly spiritual in quality, rests entirely on subjective rather than objective foundations, and is consequently invested at the best with none but secondary authoritativeness. In other words, asking ourselves simply what the sanctified mind and heart are inclined to believe on this question, we must remember that we are still dealing with a form

of testimony which is but inward and ideal at the best, and which therefore can have no value whatever whenever found to be in antagonism with what the revealed Word affirms to be the truth. Even when set over against what Christian orthodoxy or the Christian symbols teach, this internal verification of saving truth can properly claim only a limited and inconclusive species of authority. But if such inward witness be found to be at variance with the objective Revelation, made to man once for all by inspiration, and embodied in the authenticated Scriptures, then surely we need no other evidence that it is unworthy of our acceptance; since it is ten thousand fold more likely that the religious consciousness or religious feeling or disposition of any man or of any age is wrong in its affirmations, than that the Bible inculcates error on any matter pertaining to salvation.

With these preliminary considerations in mind, we may now turn to consider in brief what is described as the regenerate consciousness, — contemplating first its general nature and authoritativeness, and afterwards its specific testimony on the particular doctrine in issue.

**I. Christian  
Consciousness,  
its Nature and  
Authority.**

What is the regenerate or Christianized, in distinction from the natural consciousness? The latter obviously exists in two main forms, the spontaneous and the philosophic. The first, is that instant and immediate capacity of knowing, which we recognize as a primary endowment of the mind, the light of all our seeing and the basis of all intelligence,—possessed alike by all men and constituting in each and all the fundamental ground and evidence of whatever is known.

The second is that higher form of the same capacity, consequent upon the training and development of the mental powers, through which the mind is enabled to see truth in broader ranges, and in more abstract and commanding forms—the power to behold and to know things more distinctly in their principles and their fundamental relationships. In the phrase of Coleridge, this philosophic consciousness, thus developed only in an elect class, stands behind the spontaneous consciousness, found in all classes, and is its trained guide, its more intelligent interpreter. But both are alike natural, and as such are limited to such knowledge and such truth as the natural man unvitalized by grace is capable of discerning; obviously, there is a higher sphere and mode of knowledge to which, by the nature of the case, neither can ever rise.

That regeneration by the Spirit of God brings with it, not a new faculty or sense, but an increased ability to know, and especially to know spiritual and saving truth, will not be questioned by any one who is familiar with the profound exposition of this fact contained in the letter of Paul to the Corinthian Church. We are assured on his authority that, in connection with the experience of saving grace, there comes an enlarged capacity to apprehend, a new form of spiritual discernment, a measure of intellectual insight and experience, which may properly be called a Christian, as distinguished from even the philosophic variety of the merely natural consciousness. For, grace not only renews the will in man, changes the order and range of his purposes, quickens his higher while it represses his lower sensibilities, and revolutionizes the entire domain of feeling as well as action: it also induces a corresponding transformation through all the mental life, expands



the rational powers while it supplies new fields for thought, and reveals larger objects of knowledge, and so enables the soul to behold and to know what, apart from grace, it would never have discerned. True faith is more than a process of feeling or of choice,—it is also a new vision, and a new disclosure. This regenerated consciousness does not indeed concern itself primarily with those objects of knowledge which are perceived by the natural understanding, or even with the abstract truth discovered by the reason: it is occupied rather with spiritual verities, and with these in their essential substance and being, and as related to the supreme issue of salvation. It specially beholds God, and makes Him in His various personalities and relationships manifest to the soul,—not indeed in such forms or modes as render needless objective proofs or other ontologic evidences, but still with a substantiating clearness and force such as the highest naturalistic philosophy can not attain.<sup>1</sup>

But while we recognize the existence of such a revealing endowment, possessed in greater or less degree by every regenerate soul, we are bound to protect ourselves by wise discrimination from those serious errors into which some advocates of this doctrine have fallen. Such gracious consciousness, for example, is in no primary sense of the term a revelation—an immediate disclosure of spiritual truth to the soul, by a direct act of God. Neither can it be regarded as an equivalent of inspiration, or as a species of supernatural communication of knowledge closely analogous to that which those inspired souls enjoyed by whom the Scriptures were prepared for mankind. Neither should it be described

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<sup>1</sup>HARRIS, *Self-Revelation of God*, Chapter II: God in Consciousness.

as a preternatural interpreter of the Word, such as enables its possessor to read between the lines of that Word, and to see more in its pages than the words themselves, as once selected by the Holy Ghost, distinctly teach. Nor is this consciousness a teacher so lofty or so true, that its testimonies do not need the substantiation of divine things which the understanding gathers, and the verifying reason contributes to faith. These are natural and frequent, but dangerous perversions of the doctrine, as taught in the Pauline epistles; and those who most readily accept that doctrine in its blessed fullness, probably have greatest occasion to guard their minds against all such illicit implications.

For example, however widely the terms, revelation and inspiration, may be employed as descriptive of the complex historic process by which God has made Himself known to men in His infallible Word, they should never be so reduced or minimized in their sacred import, as to be taken as illustrative analogies of even the highest, purest insight ever granted to believing souls within the Church. At the best, our regenerate consciousness will behold the truth of God not as prophets and apostles beheld it, but only through a glass darkly, and in forms which are narrowed and partial, when contrasted with the fullness of Revelation. The possession of such consciousness is consequently no infallible safeguard against error, however sincerely its instructions are accepted. Moreover, the regenerate consciousness even of the Church has not been, is not, uniform in its teaching; but, as the history of Christian belief too plainly shows, has often been and still often is at variance with itself,—defective, inharmonious, distracting in its testimonies. It is never safe, therefore, to interpret the Bible by the tests of

consciousness alone, however clear or impressive their substantiation may seem to our minds: the living and eternal Word stands ever above our highest apprehensions of its teaching, and however far the witness within may carry us, we shall ever find a wider circumference of Scripture, stretching out beyond the widest ranges of our experience, and furnishing for all saving truth a broader, more enduring verification. With that supreme objective authority, the authentications of consciousness, however clear or lofty, can never become coördinate.<sup>1</sup>

Nor does the witness of consciousness render needless those forms of proof and evidence with which the understanding and the reason of the Christian are directly concerned,—those discursive and logical reasonings by which the divine Revelation, with all its sacred contents, is ever commended to the mind of man. There is a serious error, as well as a sublime truth, in the often quoted aphorism of Coleridge, respecting the self-verifying power of revealed truth.<sup>2</sup> While every ma-

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<sup>1</sup>An instructive lecture on this subject by Prof. E. C. SMYTH, entitled, *From Lessing to Schleiermacher, or From Rationalism to Faith*, may be found in the BOSTON LECTURES, 1870, on Christianity and Skepticism. The lecture is an ardent plea for the religious consciousness as the decisive standard of Christian doctrine; its fundamental position is that the final and conclusive test of the Christ of history is the Christ within us. But how obvious it is that he who begins his theologizing on such a basis, must logically end sooner or later in a theology, not of Scripture as the supreme objective measure of belief, nor even of the intellect and reason as the final test of truth, but of mere feeling—a theology as variable and as uncertain as the sandy foundation on which it is reared?

<sup>2</sup>“In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together; the words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being; and whatever thus finds me, brings with it an irresistible evidence that it proceeded from the Holy Spirit.” COLERIDGE, *Letters on Inspiration*, II.

tured Christian mind will come to possess such an internal standard—the resultant of all its antecedent meditations, feelings, convictions, purposes within the sphere of religion, and while it spontaneously judges by this interior standard whatever further doctrine arises within the range of its spiritualized vision, there is always danger that what such a mind has come to know and receive, may become a hindrance rather than a help to further attainment, and that by ignoring the objective signs and proofs of Christian doctrine, it may lose its distinctive sense and estimate of that doctrine as thus inwardly manifested. They are not always the strongest disciples, who are readiest to ignore these outward verifications, or to accept as sufficient what Coleridge calls the irresistible evidence of the Spirit. The understanding and the reason, investigation and analysis, logic and demonstration, have their ordained place and value in the commendation of the truth of God to human faith, as truly as has the gracious consciousness, whether of the individual believer or of the Church. The ultimate standard of all doctrines, dogmas, opinions, hopes of men lies in the Divine Word itself, as carefully studied, analyzed, verified by the human mind—working according to its own legitimate and necessary laws.

In a word, the divine Revelation tries and tests, not only all that lies in our consciousness, but that consciousness itself; the living Scripture is both our supreme teacher and the final judge of our belief. And the instant any believer begins to discriminate among the biblical teachings, according to the suggestions of his personal consciousness, accepting whatever conforms to this standard, and ignoring or setting aside whatever in the phrase of Coleridge does not find him, or com-

mend itself to him in the depths of his spiritual being, he has entered upon a course which at the best will ultimately render him blind to much that the divine Word teaches, and which may transmute his faith into an empty speculation, and make his spiritual life a rationalistic fantasy, or perchance a delusive form, rather than a gracious reality and power. He may perhaps repudiate past or present creeds or theologians—he may turn a deaf ear to the holy voices of the Church, and still be safe, so long as he remains loyal to the Word of God, as sufficient and final; but when he submits that Word to the final interpretation or arbitration of consciousness, he plunges into a sea of perils whose billows may whelm him even forever.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>It is almost inevitable that the problem of Inspiration should become prominent, as it has already become, in connection with the dogma of *post mortem* probation. In this treatise, no particular theory of inspiration is affirmed; it is held simply that the books of the Old and New Testament, so far as they are canonically verified, are in a true sense the Word of God, and as such are, when intelligently interpreted, our infallible and sufficient guide in all matters pertaining to salvation,—God rather than man being their Author, and investing them, as the authentic record of His revelation of Himself to man in grace, with an authoritativeness which is divine and absolute throughout. From this general truth, it is a just inference that to substitute any hypothesis or dogma not distinctly made known in this infallible Word, in the place of a doctrine which is there openly revealed, or to propose any modification of such doctrine in the interest of some supposititious dogma or hypothesis for which full biblical warrant is not claimed, and to do this on the authority of consciousness, is a process fatally at variance with sound views of Inspiration itself. Nor is it strange that the genuine and thorough and holy loyalty to Scripture of men who seem to be engaged in such a process, should be anxiously doubted in many quarters; though they may be unconscious of their error, they are still within the dangerous circle of its contracting folds, and are certain to experience its fatal pressure at the end.

These cursory suggestions respecting the regenerate consciousness in general, are to be regarded merely as a helpful introduction to the main question here in issue, whether in fact such consciousness is arraying itself in favor of the dogma of a salvation after death.

**II. Christian  
Consciousness,  
its particular  
Testimony.**

As has been intimated, we are directly confronted at this point by the claim strenuously urged by some adherents of this dogma, that whatever may be the teaching of the historic symbols, or however indistinct the biblical basis and material for the dogma may seem, the crystalizing consciousness of the church is even now demanding it as a working hypothesis, and is evidently moving rapidly toward its full and decisive acceptance as an article of Christian belief and a law of Christian action. How far is this claim justified by facts, and what degree of significance is properly to be attached to the tendency thus described?

It may frankly be admitted here that this dogma, like restorationism and other popular varieties of universalism, has gained some degree of currency in our time, especially among certain classes of educated and sensitive minds. It has found favor, as we have seen, with some exegetical scholars, who have been led into it by their interpretation of the few crucial passages already considered; and also, on speculative grounds chiefly, with some eminent theologians, especially in Germany. It has been adopted with ardor by a particular school of English thought,—a school conspicuous for the genius and culture, the rhetorical skill and finish, the personal and official prominence of its leaders, and conspicuous also for its general tendency toward latitudinarianism in doctrinal opinion, and for its lack of definite and forceful theologic quality. It has

found currency in many departments of literature also: the *In Memoriam* of Tennyson, for example, is saturated with it, and is weakened and corrupted by it at numerous points. Nor in poetry merely, but in multiplied other literary forms, which need no enumeration here, do we find traces of the universalistic hope that at last, far off, at last, human sin will wholly disappear and every earthly winter change to an eternal spring, so that ultimately in the divine ordering,

“Not one life shall be destroyed,  
Or cast as rubbish to the void,  
When God hath made the pile complete.”

So far as this is a natural movement merely, whether originating in idealistic conceptions of human nature and human life, or springing from the spontaneous revolt of the heart against the stern and solemn teachings of Scripture, it may safely be left, as so many similar movements have been left in the past, to the searching scrutiny and adjudication of time. But so far as it may properly assert for itself a spiritual rather than natural origin, it certainly demands our thoughtful and dispassionate consideration,—especially since it is assuming to be the present representative and forerunner of a movement, more comprehensive and revolutionary, which is yet not only to create a new theology for the Church, but also to inspire and control the practical life and activities of Christendom. Is this claim anything more than another illustration of that common tendency of minds which are both strong and sensitive,—minds animated by earnest convictions, but insufficiently submissive to the restraints of calm and thoughtful investigation—to fancy that the thought of the Church must be perceiving and believing what they so ardently affirm and hold as true? Have we not here,

in other words, an example of that fallacious form of argument which consists chiefly in claiming universality for what, in fact, is particular and local only—in inferring from a few conspicuous instances the existence of a great stream of tendency, which is destined ere long to overspread the continents? And further, were the existence of such a general tendency established by sufficient evidence, would it not still be legitimate to inquire whether this were indeed an instance of healthful advance and development along lines which the Holy Ghost has chosen and revealed for the guidance of the Church, or were rather the dark premonition of some temporary falling away from revealed truth, of some grievous relapse into destructive error, such as have already more than once made their appearance in Christendom? Still further, might we not fairly raise at this point the rudimental question whether, if such generic consciousness actually existed, its dictates could properly have any conclusive force with us, unless they were distinctly commended and confirmed by the objective and eternal Word? And, beyond this, we might well ask whether, in view of the marked antagonism between this asserted consciousness and the generic consciousness of past ages as evidenced in all Christian symbolism, we would not be justified at this point in setting consciousness over against consciousness, court against court, and finally in refusing to accept either as an authoritative expression and standard of the true faith?

But it is enough to note the simple fact that no such generic witness of the regenerate consciousness exists, or seems to be rising like a new sun on the broad horizon of Christian belief. Not only is it far from being true that the Church is accepting or is tending



toward the acceptance of this assuming dogma: the truth rather is that the Church is still intelligently standing steadfastly by her ancient and certified faith, and this not on traditional grounds merely or mainly, as is so often alleged, but rather because her present study of the inspired Word leads her directly and only to the old conclusion. The fact rather is, that so far as the attention of the Church has been directed to this new opinion, it has distinctly rejected instead of accepting it, and this rejection is apparently strengthening rather than weakening, as the real nature and implications of the dogma are made more apparent to the multitude of the faithful. At the strongest, we can discover nothing more at this point than the religious consciousness of a class, and a relatively small class of believers, setting itself up against the ecumenical consciousness of the Church,—a consciousness regulated, as the Church reverently believes, by what the Bible positively teaches, and which is determined to be loyal at whatever cost to every thing, on this subject as on all others, which the Bible directly declares to be true.

And this must remain the final response to the presumptuous claim here considered,—at least until such time as evangelical Christendom shall be visibly seen to be forsaking its old creed, and accepting a more universalistic view of Christ, of the Gospel and salvation, and of the future of the human race in the life to come.<sup>1</sup> Vague prognostications that such a change

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<sup>1</sup>It is a noticeable fact that in the advocacy and especially in the defence of the dogma under discussion, it has been continually assumed that this change has already taken place, or is now in fact transpiring. With singular boldness it has been affirmed, without any adequate historic evidence, that the old formularies of belief are all outgrown at this point, and are substantially laid

will happen, born largely of the wish that it may happen, are of small import here. Sweeping affirmations as to what the world outside of the Church is believing, are even less significant, since the opinion, the sentiment, the wish of the world have never been acknowledged by Christianity as authoritative in matters of belief. Neither are casual and local agitations within the Church,—the impulses or movements of a class, the outbreaks of personal enthusiasm or party zeal, the humanitarian pronouncements of some school or section—to be mistaken for distinct indices of some great theological revolution. Nay more; were the church itself to yield for a time to such influences, and consent to the ignoring or modifying of what she has long been teaching as salutary doctrine, even this would not prove this illusive hypothesis true, since the church of any age is a thousand fold more likely to be erroneous in its interpretations, than the Bible is to be false. But apart from all this, after comprehensive survey of the entire field, we may unhesitatingly conclude for the

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aside already. A more unwarranted assertion was never made. It is indeed true, for example, that large improvements have been made recently, as in the days of Jonathan Edwards, within the Calvinistic system. But these improvements have been made for the strengthening, not the subversion or impairing of that system; and their admission has in fact immensely enhanced its claim to an honorable place among the accepted systems of evangelical belief. The allegation that modern Calvinism is dying out, is wholly unsupported by facts; on the contrary, the system bearing that maligned but noble name, was never so strong in the esteem of Christendom as at this moment. Nor are the other kindred systems of faith dying out, or losing in any appreciable degree their hold on the judgment and heart of the Church of God. In fact, evangelical orthodoxy was never more alive, never more instinct with conscious power, never more productive or beneficent than in our time.

present at least, that whatever may be true of some conspicuous minds or classes, the consciousness of the church is, as yet, practically uncorrupted by this error, and shows no strong indications of being seriously affected by it in the near future.

Passing over into another department of Christian experience, often confused with the preceding yet in

**III. The Ap-  
peal to Feeling—  
General Sugges-  
tions.**

fact distinct from it, we are called to consider what may be described in general as the appeal to religious feeling, in support of the doctrine of a future salvation.—Here again it is of vital moment to emphasize the distinction already suggested between the religious feelings, and all forms of natural sensibility, however close the resemblance or relation between them. There is no doubt, for example, that the desire to avoid the pains of hell or to gain the awards of heaven, may have in them no religious quality whatever—may be as intrinsically selfish at the root as the desire to gain any other form of good for the sake of self. Much of the current appeal to our sympathetic interest in sinful men, or to our pity for the lost, springs from a kindred source in the fallen nature, and is equally void of religious worth or authority. Neither can it fairly be questioned that a considerable part of the argument urged against the orthodox doctrine of guilt and punishment, against the wisdom and righteousness of God in His vast scheme of moral administration, against eternal condemnation, is of the same type. When thoroughly analyzed, such argument too often betrays its origin in natural sentiment, in a bad selfhood, rather than in holy and submissive faith. Indeed, is there not some just ground for the query,

harsh as it may seem, whether the strongest popular support of current universalism and its adjunctive errors, is not born of such merely naturalistic sensibility—is not an illicit protest of what at the bottom is human selfishness, against the plans and ways of God as set forth in Revelation?

It is indeed true that the Bible itself sometimes appeals to our natural feeling, and that our holy religion justifies itself at certain points by its considerate recognition of the better sensibilities of human nature. Our Lord occasionally seems to rest His teaching on foundations thus laid in the natural man: some of His parables of mercy, of equity, of stewardship, of warning, for illustration, find their primary force largely in the fact that they are spontaneously indorsed and ratified by the natural reason and conscience. Paul also, in more than one instance, sustains his great doctrines and precepts in a similar way. Yet the manifest fact is that neither the Bible nor Christianity consents to be subjected to the tests which natural feeling supplies, however urgent such feeling may appear: they rather present themselves for human credence on far higher ground—on the ground that they come to men directly from God, and that they possess an intrinsic right to demand that all human impulses, sensibilities, desires, shall always be held in loyal subordination to their supreme authority. Were mankind sinless, and all their sympathetic feelings in full harmony with the reality of things as God sees it, still Christian faith must stand, not on such human supports, but on the truth itself as He reveals it. But the havoc which sin has wrought in human nature is at no point more apparent or more dreadful than within the circle of human sensibility. Not merely has it given wild and destructive play to

all the more sensuous and selfish tendencies in human nature; it has likewise repressed, dwarfed, blunted all higher feeling; its worst effects manifest themselves in the loftier sphere of ethical sensibility. How far man has been carried, during the long centuries of his sin, down in the scale of right and pure feeling, it is impossible for us to tell: we only begin to know in some measure how dreadful the depth is, when we begin to aspire upward toward that angelic range of spiritual sensibility whose heights, even in our blindness, we dimly discern and faintly long to reach. That we can not trust these dwarfed and enfeebled sensibilities as our guides in studying the celestial verities of religion, is only too obvious. He who determines to believe only what they teach him, or sets them up as tests and standards of the truth unfolded in the divine Word, can reasonably expect nothing better than delusion or unbelief as the outcome of his false premise.

The broad fact is that none but purely religious feeling—such sensibility as is born of grace, and is peculiar to the regenerate man—can properly be admitted here as entitled to any weight; the same rule which excludes the authority of the natural as distinct from gracious consciousness, must no less decisively shut out the voice of natural as distinct from gracious feeling also. But how far may we rely on the witness of the religious sensibilities as proof of the truth or falsity of any doctrinal proposition contained in Scripture? Every reader of *Locksley Hall* will recall the indignant protest which that remarkable poem contains, against regarding the feelings as dangerous guides in life, and against preaching down the heart with petty maxims gathered from the field of prudential experience. Like protest is often made against the orthodox theology, as tending to

the undue repression of gracious sensibility,—as exalting the cold processes and decisions of the Christian intellect into supreme authoritativeness, to the exclusion of those valuable modifications or meliorations of belief which have their origin rather in holy emotion. In the one case as in the other, such protest contains an appreciable element of truth. That orthodoxy would sometimes be not only mollified but improved in both form and potency, by a more distinct admixture of the emotional element, may readily be admitted. Within certain limits it is as true that there is a theology of feeling, as that there is a theology of the intellect; and in the highest sense, that may be regarded as the best type of theology in which both intellect and feeling, thought and sensibility, are most judiciously and happily blended as regulative forces.

Yet, how obvious it is that a theology inspired and shaped substantially by the gracious emotions, can have little authoritativeness or worth, when compared with a theology which is visibly rooted and grounded in the objective Word of God, faithfully studied, wisely understood! That Word existed before humanity, is the outgrowth of a process higher than man, waits not for any indorsement which human feeling may bring, asserts each doctrine and each duty with a supramundane majesty which is primary, instant, perpetual in its appeal to the soul.<sup>1</sup> So far as the religious sensibilities

<sup>1</sup>For an illustration of the opposite view, see *M. S. M., Appeal to Life*; Preface. "The Word came by inspiration *through humanity*, and the processes of human life, and the actual life of its Head! . . . The interpretation of the Word searches and reads life as it goes on in the world in history. . . . *The word it finds here, it finds to be the revealed Word of God.* . . . *Truth is not actually truth until it gets past the respect properly entertained for dogma, and beyond reverence for an external revelation.*" Here

have been educated by it, and conform themselves to its peculiar guidance, they may indeed be helpful both in assisting the mind to right apprehensions of sacred doctrine, and in confirming its faith in the gracious verities which God, not the sanctified reason or heart, has taught. But on the other hand, whenever either the reason or the sensibilities of even the most mature Christian are exalted above that external revelation, and made the primary instructor of the soul as to the truths on which its salvation depends, not only is the divine order of things subverted, and Scripture reduced to a secondary place among the educational forces in the spiritual life: the door is opened at once for the admission of a thousand serious errors, and that life itself is directly exposed to enormous if not certainly destructive perils. And where is there any adequate protection against such liabilities, unless it be found in the objective Word itself—in that Word carefully and often studied by the mind until its saving truths are not only apprehended in their full eogeneity, but are accepted by the intelligent soul as being the very doctrine which God has given man, to be believed and obeyed in order to his everlasting life?

Granting to the religious feelings under this just condition, some secondary or tributary ministry to Christian faith, we are bound still further to utter a word of warning against certain specific errors to which believers are exposed in the application of this generic provision. It is a frequent though palpable mistake, for example,

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we find not only a radical'y defective theory of inspiration, but also by natural consequence a radically false conception of Revelation itself. Does the dogma advocated by this author require such revolutionary modifications of belief on points so vital as these?

to allow one variety or class of spiritual emotions to control in the determination of some doctrinal question, to the exclusion of other varieties or classes of holy feeling equally entitled to a voice in such adjudication. It is a mistake equally obvious and hardly less frequent, to subvert the natural order or gradation of the religious sensibilities, by elevating those to the highest place which in the nature of the case are subordinate, and are therefore entitled to minor consideration only. No less serious is the radical mistake of ignoring that sacred and beautiful harmony born of the Spirit, which in the complete Christian life must ever subsist between all the varieties, grades, classes of holy emotion—a harmony which has its perfect type in the sublime concord and serenity which exist eternally above all apparent discords, among the attributes and the affections of God Himself. That these are real exposures will be apparent to every one who has studied the history of opinion in this department of theology: illustrations of each will come into view in a more specific survey of the field.<sup>1</sup>

Among the varieties of religious sensibility to which appeal is made in support of the dogma of *post mortem* probation, the most conspicuous is what may be styled the humane feeling,—  
IV. Particular  
Appeal to the  
Humane Feeling.
love for man, expressing itself in brotherly interest in his welfare, in pity for his sinful and

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<sup>1</sup>On the illicitness of the attempt to interpret Scripture through the feelings, or to subvert biblical doctrine through appeals to the religious sentiments, see HOVEY, *State of the Impenitent Dead*, Lect. VII. WRIGHT, G. F., *Probation after Death*. On the other hand, BEECHER, E., *Doctrine of Retribution*, maintains that the tenet of an endless condemnation can not be true because human feeling is against it. Similar error appears in WHITON, *Is "Eternal" Pun-*



lost condition, and in ardent desire for his deliverance from sin, and especially from the condemnation, present and future, due to his sin. Here of course we legitimately exclude all merely natural sensibility, and contemplate only that holy form of love for man, that broader, purer humanity, which has its justifying ground in the second great commandment, as both enunciated and exemplified by our divine Lord.

That this type of spiritual emotion figures largely, sometimes controllingly, in the advocacy of the dogma in question, is very obvious. Vivid pictures of the weaknesses and moral disabilities of men, of the evil forces working against their better natures and like strong tides sweeping them away from their proper moorings, of these better natures full of good desires and capable of right action though often overcome by evil, of the incompleteness and narrowness of life in many cases and the suddenness with which it is often terminated before it has been well begun, of the awfulness of being lost and lost forever under the retributive wrath of God, of the unutterable miseries of hell and the torment of the worm that dieth not and the fire that is not quenched,—vivid pictures of this sort are so drawn out before the mind as to arouse every humane feeling, and to hurry it on by an influence stronger than logic to the conclusion that there must be some other, less painful solution of the great problem of the future life. The potency of this appeal to the arbitration of feeling is only too apparent; and the results, though varying in degree, are uniform in kind. While

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*ishment Endless?* But when or where has Christianity consented that its doctrines should be tested by a standard so fragile, so variable, so often contradictory as this must be?

some are led by such awakened sympathy merely to some meliorating view, some gentler possibility, such as the one here considered, others are carried over by the same process sometimes into restorationism or annihilationism or some kindred hypothesis—sometimes into the more radical error of absolute universalism.

Contemplating here this meliorating view only, we see at once that its real value must after all be measured largely by the degree of success actually following the experiment of a probation after death. The question whether there be few or many that are saved in this way, still confronts us. Have we any information which clearly assures us that any will actually be brought to Christ by this *post mortem* presentation of the Gospel? Will the number of souls thus redeemed be large, or only a small fragment of those who in eternity may hear and decide upon the offer of salvation? Will not the present problem of sin and condemnation, in an innumerable host of cases, still remain to perplex our faith? Will there not be a hell after all, whose horrors must be real, and whose duration must be everlasting? Shall it be said in reply, as Maurice and Farrar affirm, and as Tennyson confidently sings, that all the dead, or at least all but an insignificant fragment, will in fact be saved by grace in the intermediate state? This is only another, more polished variety of universalism, without warrant in either nature or Scripture. Shall it be said, as the American school of advocates are more cautiously saying, that we can assert nothing beyond the fact of probation, and can furnish no clear guarantee that the grace which so often fails to save in this life will be more successful in another? This answer, leaving us with the old perplexity in our hearts, wholly fails to satisfy the humane feeling whose support it seeks. The

hypothesis of a probation which may actually save no one, or which may save only a few out of the vast multitude of the dead, only introduces a new element of darkness and painfulness into a problem already overwhelming in its appeal to our pious sympathies. The fact is, that any hypothesis which does not solve more positively than this the fundamental question respecting the destiny of the dead, is beset, so far as our spiritual sensibilities are concerned, with all the embarrassment that surrounds the orthodox view. Though it appeals to feeling, and rests so much upon feeling, it gives no satisfying answer to its own appeal.

Another difficulty of much greater magnitude appears in the singular ignoring of unquestioned and unchangeable fact, which is so apparent in this hypothesis. What is the essential fact here? Can we doubt that probation both natural and gracious, sin and guilt, condemnation and punishment for wrong doing, the pangs and retributions of conscience, forebodings of soul in view of eternity, death and judgment, and the resistless wrath of God flaming out against evil men forever, are all realities—realities not merely fundamental in Scripture, but verified in many unquestionable forms by the testimonies of nature and of the soul in man? And must not these realities be taken fully into account,—considerately weighed in all their solemnity, and properly adjusted and provided for in any scheme of salvation for man, whether in this life or in another? And of what avail is it in such a case so to stir up the feelings, so to arouse the sympathies, whether natural or religious, as to render the mind insensible to such verities, and to pervert its vision and apprehension of the actual truth? The fact that the reality of things pains us does not change the reality of things; the blind

protests of our feeling will not alter the divine plan; tears cannot wash away the eternal verity. And is it not both foolish and wicked to work thus upon the spiritual sensibilities through ungrounded hypotheses or illusive guesses, until the soul grows indifferent to the essential fact, and comes to rest at last in a dogma which the divine Word nowhere commends to human acceptance?

What men need to know in this world is not what will give them present gratification or calm their present solicitude, but that which is for their best interest, their enduring welfare. Vain is it to soothe by anodynes or to comfort through temporary stimulation the sufferer from disease, whose only hope of future health lies in an hour of severe torture, and the sharp knife of the skillful surgeon. The true friend is he who solaces by no illusive promises, who conceals the reality with no flattering words, who blunts the feeling with no momentary sedatives, while the consuming disease goes on and on toward its fatal consummation. The true friend rather is he who sees the case as it is, and honestly seeks for it not alleviation, but restoration,—who yields to no inconsiderate grief, no morbid sympathy, but stands bravely by the bedside of the sufferer, and sustains him with brotherly consolation while the physician performs his painful but indispensable task. The illustration is appropriate here. The truest impulses of Christian sensibility are not those which incite the soul to anticipations, pleasant enough in the contemplation, but having the fatal defect of possessing no sure foundation in the inspired Word,—not those which beguile man into indifference to the solemnities of a present probation, by promising them a probation under possibly more favorable auspices, in the life to

come—not those which, by unwarrantable interpretations of the mission of Christ and the scope of His religion and the nature of the biblical salvation, lay broad foundations, not merely for a probation for infants and the heathen, but for a salvation which includes the race substantially, and which will sooner or later restore all men, or nearly all, to the image of God and to eternal blessedness. Those are the truest and best impulses of Christian sensibility which, under every stress and pain, cling closest to the facts as given in Scripture, and which lead their possessor to tell sinful men the truth and the whole truth, exactly as God has declared it, and on His authority alone.

So far as this appeal is based on what we know respecting the sentiment of benevolence in God, its defective quality, as we have already seen, becomes easily apparent. For that sentiment takes into account, not the momentary comfort or the partial advantage, but rather the complete well-being of the soul, and this not for the brief hour of time alone, but for a long eternity. It contemplates not merely the interests of a class, and that the class which is farthest away from Him in feeling and in character, but rather the welfare of the entire universe with all its classes and gradations of moral being. It studies the good of the righteous as well as the good of the sinful, regards the interests of the law as well as the feelings of the transgressor, acts according to the behests of an affection whose scope is broad as the universe of spiritual being and whose depths are unfathomable to mortal or even seraphic intelligence. What a benevolence so lofty and perfect may induce such a person as God to do with sinful men—men who have misused their opportunity while undergoing an earthly probation, natural or gracious,

it surely is not ours to determine, or even to surmise. We are bound to pause where the Scripture pauses in its disclosures—to accept simply what Christ and the Spirit have taught us; hoping for nothing and promising nothing as to either time or eternity beyond what this God has in these ways distinctly revealed. To go a step farther is perilous—is death.

Kindred appeal is sometimes made, especially in the more recent advocacy of the dogma of future salvation, to the sentiment of equity, the sense of justice, as combining with the humane feeling just considered, in the demand for this hypothesis.—It is alleged that we imperatively need such an explanation as is afforded in this dogma to satisfy the feeling of right as well as the impulse of benevolence, and that in the fact that such satisfaction is gained through this hypothesis, we have convincing evidence that the hypothesis itself is true. We have already had occasion to weigh this argument from justice in other relations; some brief reference to it seems desirable in this final connection also.

V. Appeal to the Christian Sense of Justice.

The underlying presumption at this point is, that whatever God is doing is right, and that His intentions as to the future of man and of the moral universe are right also. In the estimate of every Christian mind this presumption is supreme and decisive. That perplexities inscrutable to us will be apparent in an administration so vast and comprehensive,—that faith must often be exercised and absolute trust be required, especially at points where this administration manifests itself in darker forms such as chastisement or retribution, is an axiom with every true believer. But such a measure of confidence in the divine administration is

demanding by the nature of the case, and is spontaneous in every devout soul. Nothing that anywhere appears, whether of present sin and evil or of future possibility, can really disturb the faith of the pious heart in the perfection of the divine character or dealing; it will, it must hold beyond all question the underlying postulate that God is right always and everywhere.

But we are dealing here with fact as well as presumption. The tremendous fact is that this righteous God has actually instituted among men a system of probation, is placing each soul upon trial, subjects men to temptation, chastizes wrong doers, is punishing sin in this life, warns of future retribution, and has revealed the existence of a hell created by His hand as a prison-house for transgressors.<sup>1</sup> In other words, this righteous God is doing and will do exactly what the Bible declares Him to be doing and intending to do; nor have we the slightest ground for inferring that He will ever

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<sup>1</sup>In wide contrast with the revolt against Hell, which is so conspicuous among the advocates of future probation, stand those impressive lines which the genius of DANTE (*Canto III.*: 1-8) imagined as engraved above the entrance of the *Inferno*,—lines which describe not merely the belief and teaching of the Church in that century, but also the profoundest conviction of the Church in all ages, as to the eternity of Hell, and to the wisdom and justice, and even the benevolence of God in laying the deep foundations of that necessary prison in His moral universe:

“Through me men pass to th’ city of great woe;  
Through me men pass to endless misery;  
Through me men pass where all the lost ones go.  
*Justice it was that moved my Maker high,  
The Power of God it was that fashioned me,  
Wisdom supreme, and primal Charity.*  
Before me nothing was of things that be,  
Save things eternal, and eternal I endure.”

—*Plumptre’s Translation.*

swerve in the least degree from the line of action which he has thus announced to mankind, and on which He has in fact entered. His sense of equity will never change; His grace, however large or free, will never undertake anything that is contrary to what His equitable purpose has already determined. In such a case, are we in any possible sense at liberty to set up our sentiment of justice—our feeling as to what God ought to do, either now or in the future, over against what He is doing in fact, or has declared his purpose to do hereafter? There can be but one Christian answer to such a question. To revolt against anything that He is doing, or promising to do, on the ground that such a course on His part is contrary to our sense of moral feeling, is a crime—is treason. It is not given to us to say that He ought to do, and consequently to infer that He will do, what our sense of equity seems to require that He should do, even though his Word should reveal the opposite. To do this is simply to set that sense of equity on the throne above Him, and to affirm our right not merely to be judges of His action, but even to direct such action according to our ethical preference. Surely no argument is needful to show that treason such as this is a crime hardly lower in His pure sight than the consummating sin against the Holy Ghost.

How shallow and partial, how wholly inadequate to solve such administrative problems, this human sentiment of justice is, even in its most spiritualized form, may be easily perceived. Contemplating these problems in the light of eternity, do we not see at once how incompetent the mind of man or of angel, unenlightened by revelation, must be to say what God ought to do hereafter with those who sin against Him in this life? Considering the interests of an entire moral uni-



verse, in contrast with the narrower interests of a class, however large, are we not utterly confounded in the effort to judge of what equity toward the universe may require God to do with that class or with the individual souls that compose it? Have the holy no rights as well as the sinful and unholy—no right to protection against the influence and domination of unrestrained wrong, no right to a peaceful existence under the benign sway of a government which will faithfully and surely punish sin and rebellion, no right to the compensations which in the divine constitution of things are promised to virtue, or to the eternal exemption from sin and unholiness which constitutes one of the special privileges of heaven? Contemplating God Himself, and what in his own sight must be forever due to Him as a perfect Being and the eternal Head of the moral universe, how prostrate we seem to be, how utterly incapable, in the endeavor to decide, from the impulses of our moral feeling, what is best and right for Him to do with those who may die in ignorance, in sin, in unbelief! Viewed in any aspect, is it not impossible for a considerate mind, at all instructed and rectified by grace, even to attempt, apart from the plain teaching of the Scriptures, the solution of any of these great administrative problems? More specifically, how would such a mind dare, on the warrant of its innate sense of justice, to say whether God shall institute a scheme of probation, who shall be included in that scheme, what forms it shall assume, how long it shall last, or what shall be its outcome?

Is it not to be feared that these appeals to the sentiment of justice in behalf of the dogma proposed, spring too often from shallow rather than large or deep views of what God is as a perfect Being, and of what

His moral administration is, regarded as the outgrowth and expression of His perfect nature? Are they not seriously lacking in holy fear of God, in profound reverence for His person and His manifested works and ways, in that solemn awe which ever filled the breast of prophet and apostle, in submissive acquiescence in His holy sovereignty and in His perfect law, in that sacred loyalty to Him which receives unquestioningly whatever He sends, and does without question whatever He commands? But these are qualities which must enter as vitally as our sense of equity into all worthy contemplation of such a problem as that here considered. He in whose religious life they do not flourish as the essential counterpoise to the humane feeling—as the sacred correlative to the conviction that God is love, is largely if not fatally incapacitated from right apprehensions of such an issue. So long as his spiritual being is not suffused and solemnized throughout by their subduing power, the truth on this point, as on many others, will remain to him a mystery—a mystery which nothing but larger culture of that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom, can ever dissolve.

Let it be observed especially that these profounder sentiments, and particularly the sentiment of loyalty, find their supreme point of interest and of concentration in the Gospel of life in Christ Jesus. As angels desire to look into the sacred mysteries of this plan of grace, hovering ever around it in holy reverence and adoration, so around that gracious scheme all the holy instincts, all the deepest sensibilities of the sanctified soul spontaneously gather. Fear as well as joy, reverence and awe as well as love, cordial submission and sense of loyalty to this Gospel, spring up irresistibly

in the breasts of those who have worthily received it. The true Christian receives Christ exactly as He is revealed, accepts His mediation in the precise form in which it is exhibited to the eye of faith, submits to every condition which the Mediator imposes, welcomes the offer just as it is made, and believes in the nature and extent of the consequent salvation precisely as they are made known to him in the Scriptures. He has no wish to change a single feature, to alter any term or condition, to enlarge or to abridge the applications of this Gospel in any direction—to rationalize the plan of mercy at any point, or to criticise a single aspect or element in it, as these are revealed to him in the inspired Word. Idealizing speculations respecting what either love or equity may require God to do with His own scheme of redemption in spheres and relations unrevealed, are wholly foreign to the instincts of such a mind. It rather receives the message of mercy exactly as it is given, and reposes on it exactly as it stands,—never doubting that he who provided such a Gospel will accomplish through it just what He has declared His purpose to accomplish, and will at last, alike in salvation and in condemnation, fully justify before the universe His righteous works and ways.<sup>1</sup>

One other variety of the appeal to religious feeling may be briefly considered here,—the appeal to the sentiment of hope.—Hope has been well defined in general

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<sup>1</sup>It would be well for certain American expounders of the dogma of future probation, on the basis of these appeals to feeling, were they to ponder the weighty words of MOSES STUART, in the conclusion to his convincing treatise on *Eternal Punishment* :

“The question is not what this or that person wishes, or desires to have true, but what do the Sacred Writings teach.”

as a complex emotion, compounded of desire and expectation. Christian hope is in like manner made up of holy desires on one side, ever looking toward and long-  
 ing for some spiritual good, and on the other side of trustful anticipation and assurance, based on the divine promises as to the ultimate realization of that which is desired.

VI. Appeal to  
 the Sentiment of  
 Hope.

What now is it legitimate for the Christian to wish for, so far as a future salvation is concerned, and what may he be warranted in thus anticipating?

As to Christian desire, the general answer obviously is, that we may properly wish for just what and only what God has in His Word set before us as spiritual good. It is His to judge, for example, what is really best for us in our individual life as believers, and His both to direct and to limit our desires concerning ourselves to what is best in His sight. As on one hand, it is not lawful for us to narrow the range of our holy wishes—to long or pray for less than God thinks it best for us to have or to aspire after, so on the other hand it is unlawful in us to indulge inordinate aspirations, or allow ourselves to long for anything which God has not by His Word and Spirit taught us to desire. In a word, to hope for what is not promised in Scripture, or warranted by the divine dealings with men in grace, is illegitimate—is sinful. On the broadest scale, all unwarranted desires, whether relating to ourselves or to others, or to the moral universe, are in their essence wrong—are born of self and nature rather than of God.

What is true of desires, is true also of expectations. God teaches His children to expect large things, but not to expect everything which to their narrow vision

may seem possible or desirable. We have the right to anticipate for ourselves, even in this life, and still more during a long eternity, rewards and consummations to faith, such as it hath not entered into the thought or heart of man to comprehend. We have the right to look forward to a glorious age for humanity even on earth, and to expect a supreme fruition of all that God has promised for our redeemed race throughout the sublime ages of an unending future. Not expectation merely, but full assurance also, is justified here. But we have no right to expect anything for ourselves or for mankind, either now or hereafter, on any other terms or conditions than those which God has Himself laid down, or to anticipate, either now or hereafter, anything more or other than He has promised. We are to expect for ourselves, and for the race, simply what He has taught us to expect—nothing less and nothing more. Christian hope, like every other holy sentiment, needs the guiding and restraining as well as inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit, in order to preserve it from error at these points, and to fix it on right and worthy objects only. And we are ever to remember that in the sight of God it is as truly an offense to indulge inordinate expectations, to anticipate what He has not revealed, as it is to refuse to trust Him in what He has made clear and plain to childlike faith.

What warrant then has the Christian to desire that the salvation provided in the Gospel should be in its nature, conditions or applications, anything other or broader than God has revealed it to be? What warrant has he to anticipate that the practical outcome of this Gospel will be something larger than the Bible represents it,—that it will be extended into other

spheres and reach other classes and accomplish other ends than those which the Word of God has made known? More specifically, is it lawful for the believer to desire or expect the salvation of any others than those whom God has revealed His gracious intention to save,—to desire or expect the annihilation of those who have wickedly rebelled against God, as being their only method of rescue from the death that never dies,—to desire or expect the restoration of every human soul to holiness, when God has declared that there is a sin which cannot be forgiven either in this life or in the life to come,—to desire or expect the final salvation of those who have sinned against the Holy Ghost, or of the fallen angels, or of Satan himself, the founder and head of the principalities and powers of evil? These are legitimate, as they are serious questions; and the Christian answer to them will help much in determining how far religious hope may lawfully go in its dreams concerning the future state of men, and in showing just where and how such hope may become an illusion and a snare to the soul.

But while we recognize these necessary limitations to the sentiment of hope, we are by no means constrained to regard the legitimate sphere of such hope as narrow or insufficient. God has not inspired within the breast of His children a feeling so holy, so animating, without furnishing for it adequate material and the largest healthful scope. In respect, for example, to the number of the saved and of the lost, it is by no means just to allege with Farrar that, according to the position of orthodoxy, the latter class must include the vast majority of mankind. We might raise here the legitimate query whether those who advocate a future probation

merely, have any real assurance that such probation would result in the actual salvation of a majority of mankind. It might also be urged in reply that the problem involved is not one of numbers or majorities merely,—that the aggregated gain in character and in consequent usefulness and bliss attained by the saved minority, with all its glorious possibilities throughout eternity, might in the estimate of God far outweigh the loss and damnation incurred by the unsaved majority. But the more practical answer to this current allegation is that which is so well stated in part by Pusey in his forceful exposition of the freeness and fullness of salvation, of the exceeding tenderness of God toward repenting sinners, and of the possibilities of saving grace even in the emergency of a dying hour. If the prayers and alms of Cornelius were had in divine remembrance,—if in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him,—if our Lord heard the outcry of the dying thief and carried him as a trophy at once into the Paradise whither He Himself was just going in triumph, may we not, without either indulging in the universalistic delusion or contradicting our own doctrine, still cherish with Pusey a large and comforting hope respecting many, perhaps multitudes, who live and die, alas, outside of the blessed circle of the Household of Faith?

But beyond this, if the doctrine of the general salvation of infants be admitted, the question of numbers is settled at once in favor of the orthodox position. The security and the comfort which that doctrine furnishes, as we have already seen, are immeasurably greater than that afforded by the dogma of a future probation for infants,—a probation which may after all result only in the increased sinfulness and deeper dam-

nation of myriads included in that immense class, itself a probable majority of mankind. If all infants dying in infancy are saved, then the larger portion of the human race is saved, even now. But in this computation we are permitted still further to summon into view the entire future of humanity on earth—a future extending through we know not how many centuries, during whose progress the Gospel is to be universally proclaimed, and the race as a race is to be brought into obedient subjection to Christ. We may take into the account all the ages antecedent to the millennial period, in which Antichrist shall be overthrown, and the Jew and the Gentile converted, and the world subdued unto Immanuel. We may also count the glorious millennium of grace promised in the Apocalypse—that prolonged yet definite period including, it may be, many thousands of years, during which our Lord shall reign spiritually in the earth, and His religion shall prevail, with saving power, in myriads on myriads of human hearts.<sup>1</sup> And in the light of that sublime future, far transcending all present manifestations of grace, does not the question of numbers entirely change its aspect? Including that future in the computation, in vivid contrast with the few thousand years of sin, may we not believe that the number of the lost will be relatively small indeed—insignificant in comparison with that starlike host whom no man can number, seen of John

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<sup>1</sup>To one who holds the current millenarian notion of the future of the world and of humanity, the problem here considered is beset with special, if not with overwhelming perplexities. According to his view, a catastrophic ending of earthly things may occur at any hour amid flaming judgments, with all the myriads of the heathen unsaved, and with a judicial Christ incarnate, waving the awful sceptre of His power over the vast universe of the lost, both on earth and in hell.



in apocalyptic vision, singing in glory the praises of God and of the Lamb?<sup>1</sup>

Contemplating more specifically the lost minority, is it not legitimate—as has been already intimated—to recognize gradations in condemnation corresponding to the known gradations in guilt, and to admit into our general estimate the *levissima damnatio* of Augustine, as well as the fiery hell of Christ? Under the common term, Lost, must we not include the servant who knew less fully the will of his master, and who was therefore beaten with few stripes, no less than the incorrigible offender, or him who has distinctly blasphemed against the Holy Ghost, and is worthy of the lowest damnation,—recognizing in each an amenability to retribution which is exactly proportionate to the gravity of his sin, the measure of his guilt? Have we not Christ Himself with us in the comforting assurance that not one immoderate stripe will be inflicted, or one needless pang shot through the frame of any culprit in that sad universe of woe? We must indeed grant that the theology of the past has often failed to make such discriminations, biblical though they are, and that Christian preachers have too frequently drawn lurid pictures of one common hell, into whose sulphurous depths all but the redeemed, ignorant and pagan and infant as well as the open rejector of Christ, are hurled together, to be alike tormented forever and forever,—pictures whose

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<sup>1</sup>So strict a Calvinist as the venerated Charles Hodge taught positively that the number of the saved will very largely exceed the number of the lost—that the latter class will be inconsiderable in comparison with the former. Our blessed Lord, he says, when surrounded by the innumerable company of the redeemed, will be hailed as the *Salvator Hominum*—the Savior of men.—*Theol.*, Vol. I: 26. III: 879.

awfulness have tended to crush all hope, and to rob the anxious soul of every surviving comfort touching the dead. Does not the Christian theology of the present owe it to the truth of God, as well as to the sacred sentiment of hope, to correct such error by the recognition of every alleviating feature in the doctrine of damnation, which the Bible, and especially Christ Himself, anywhere suggests? We cannot abandon the doctrine of hell, an eternal hell, without being recreant to the Word, and to Him who has revealed it: but may we not so far exalt its spiritual above its physical pangs—so far regard it as a state more than a place of torment—so far emphasize the scriptural distinction between positive and privative retribution<sup>1</sup>—so far contemplate that world of the lost as a widely varied universe, with vast undulations of experience, with milder as well as severer conditions, with possible meliorations of sorrow and ill—so far recognize a merciful as well as equitable superintendence of Deity within as well as above it, as to make the doctrine even more truly biblical and rational, while at the same time it is incomparably less trying to faith—less repressive to pious hope?

There is another direction in which the sentiment of hope may find a legitimate sphere of exercise—that which appears in the contemplation of the final consummation of things under the perfect administration of a holy God. No thoughtful mind can forget that the obscurations which seem to it to surround that ad-

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<sup>1</sup>Our Lord Himself employs this distinction, as in the declaration that the wicked shall not see God—shall not enter into the kingdom of God—shall be sent away into outer darkness, and the like. The Roman Catholic Church, and many Protestant authorities also, count the forfeiture of the Beatific Vision as one among the direct punishments of the lost.

ministration, the perplexities that sorely try its confidence and often baffle expectation, are on one hand attributable mainly to the narrowness of its present range of vision, and on the other, are essential to its earthly discipline and development. Neither can any such mind forget for a moment that these obscurations are largely temporary, and that the hour is rapidly approaching when God Himself will remove such perplexity, and fully justify the assurance of His children. It is natural to the Christian thus to look upward and forward continually to the coming fruitions, and to the final consummation of our holy religion. His hope sees the grand future and rests triumphantly in it. Not merely does it anticipate the day when around the righteous and concerning the good there shall be light at even-tide: it expects at last a holy and blessed solution of every dark question respecting the number, the state, the abode of the lost also. Even the awful spectacle of a hell, flashing and flaming forever like a burning star in the calm sky of the divine purpose, no longer overwhelms it with dread. It knows that a God, who is both righteous and good, sustains that star in its place in His heavens, and sends it whirling through its appointed orbit in His moral universe,—there to be a lurid protest against sin, an example and a warning to His creatures, forever and forever.<sup>1</sup>

At this point it may be noted that the several appeals to the spiritualized consciousness and the religious

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<sup>1</sup>Those who are so much distressed over the doctrine of hell, and who after the manner of an Ingersoll fancy that the homes and hearts of Christians who in pure loyalty to the Divine Word accept that doctrine as an essential element of saving truth, are filled with a perpetual gloom, might learn a salutary lesson from

feelings, which have been passed in review, are sometimes combined more or less compactly into what is described as an appeal to human nature or to human life.—It is alleged in general, that the moral nature of man and the history and practical life of the race demand the acceptance of the dogma of a *post mortem* probation, and of the type of theology of which that dogma is the elect forerunner, as something indispensable to the harmonizing of Christianity with the current disposition and experience of the world. Some examination of this final form of argument for the dogma in question may properly close the present discussion.

VII. The Appeal  
to Human Nature  
and Human Life.

This appeal differs from that to consciousness, or to feeling, in the fact that it introduces more or less distinctly the voluntary element, and proposes the actual life of man or of the race, as a decisive measure and test of divine truth. Its essential basis lies in the volitions rather than in the intellect or the sensibilities. It inquires how mankind are in fact disposed toward the doctrine held by the Christian Church, asks what changes are needful in that doctrine in order to incline the will of men toward it, and then proposes its own universalistic hypothesis as a conciliatory modification of the orthodox belief. What it seeks is such a state-

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one of the recorded and typical experiences of Jonathan Edwards:

“As I was walking there, and looking upon the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I knew not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic sweetness; an awful sweetness, a high, and great, and holy gentleness.”

ment or presentation of the truth as shall somehow verify itself at the bar of human life, and shall win the suffrages, not of Christians only, but of the world. In one aspect, it is an appeal to history, and to the recorded drift and tendencies of humanity, made on the broad ground that what the aggregated disposition of the race does not accept, what does not conform itself to the fixed inclinations of mankind, and justify and commend itself through such conformity, cannot be regarded as a revelation from God. He is said to be immanent in the world, and to be exhibiting Himself in the facts of history, and consequently sending us into these fields for not only the illustration, but also the explanation and vindication of His written revelation. Hence we are exhorted to abandon the dogmatic and the exegetic way of determining what God has revealed, and to substitute for it what is termed the vital way—contemplating the truth as set in the light of daily life, in the processes of human society, and in the universal laws of humanity, on the general principle that the real revelation of God to us is not so much in the Scriptures as an objective disclosure, but in the Scriptures as thus interpreted by and through life—the actual life of man.<sup>1</sup>

A sublime truth and a destructive error here lie closely together. That the life of mankind furnishes a thousand interesting confirmations of Holy Writ—that

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<sup>1</sup>MUNGER, *Appeal to Life*: Preface. Coleridge somewhere says that Christianity is not a theory or a speculation, but a life,—not a philosophy of life, but a living process. But Coleridge nowhere represents Revelation itself as a process in general life and history, merely or mainly. For an interesting exposition of this generalized conception of revelation and inspiration, see BRUCE, *Chief End of Revelation*.

human history, as it unfolds from century to century, is more and more bringing the truth of God to light and making it convincing to the consciousness, the feeling, and even the will of man, is a grand fact, and one which may be largely utilized in the growing apologetic argument for Christianity. And to a certain extent the Christian scheme of doctrine is to be interpreted through such practical exhibitions of it in human history and experience: the vast and complex experiment in living, which the human race is making, is throughout a grand verification of our religion, as Jesus Christ taught it. Even the perversities of the human will, the bad inclinations and disposition, the deranged laws of humanity, only too visible in its disorderly career, all confirm the claim of our holy faith to have descended among us from the skies. And it may well enough be admitted that it would be an improvement in Christian theology if its representative minds were to be less technical, metaphysical, formulative in their expositions of it—were rather to present its holy verities in forms and methods more closely related to human experience, and more likely therefore to win and hold the practical interest of men.

All this is true, but it by no means follows from this truth that the doctrines of Christianity are best apprehended by subjecting them to the crucible and the fire of human experience, or are to be received by us only so far as they gain indorsement from the will, the moral disposition, the actual history of mankind. The appeal to life, when carried to any such extent, becomes virtually an appeal from God to man—from the divine will and nature to the human will and nature. It is the Bible viewed as an inspired book, to the sinful heart of man, and the disturbed laws and moral perversities of

humanity. Human life is corrupted by sin at every point, and is therefore always a partial, defective, more or less blind, teacher concerning divine things. Humanity is a poor lens through which to read the heavenly Word. He who carries his Bible into the world of human existence, and gathers his impressions of its doctrines or precepts from what that world says or thinks about them, or from what the world is doing about religion, will find that he has put himself into a situation where the word and will of God must remain to him a perpetual mystery. The commentaries of history and life will be quite as likely to mislead him as those of the schoolmen, and the more he trusts himself to the teachings of human nature, in its present fallen estate, the greater will be his ultimate error and downfall.

Moreover, is it not treason to inspired Scripture to subject it to any such tests? The Bible does not ask for the indorsement of human nature, or stand in the smallest degree on such indorsement. This divine book brings with it its own confirmation, and asserts for itself a supreme authority, back of man and far above man. Inspiration does not become inspiration, when the world recognizes it as such,—it is the voice of God from the first, uttering itself in human speech and commanding the world at once to receive and obey it. Revelation does not become revelation when it has been confirmed by history, or has been shown to be such by its inductively established conformity with what are called the universal laws of humanity,—Revelation *was*, when holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And surely he has not begun to apprehend the significance of that fact, as primal in grace as creation is in nature, who proposes to appeal

to human life rather than to Scripture itself for proof that any particular dogma or opinion has come into the world from God. No religious doctrine ever was, ever can be, substantiated by such a process.

In the case before us, what evidence have we that nature and life, in any intelligible sense of these words, approve the theory of a *post mortem* probation, rather than either the current orthodox view, or any of the more sweeping opinions belonging to the same species with itself? Do not nature and life also seem to approve annihilation—do they not apparently approve as well the fiction of universal restoration? Is there any vagary in this direction, however wild or delusive, for which some sort of confirmation may not be found by so unphilosophic a process as this? Moreover, to the deeper and calmer vision of Bishop Butler, are not nature and life seen rather to be in holy concurrence with the faith of the Christian Church respecting sin and law and retribution? And does not the unfeigned tremor of Felix when Paul reasoned before him of righteousness and temperance and a judgment to come, do not the outbursting confessions of Pilate and Agrippa touching Christ and His religion, does not the pitiful remorse of Judas crowding him on to the abyss of suicide, do not the admonitory words of our Lord to the Pharisees whom He described as able even of themselves to judge what is right, and who trembled and tottered as they felt the sudden tempest of conscience, and saw the approach of a day of doom,—do not all these show us, far more than any raw guesses about history, or crude interpretations of the laws of humanity or the dicta of our higher nature, what the truth of God is respecting our earthly probation, and respecting the retributive consequences which in the hour and



article of death shall gather with pitiless beatings around the head of every transgressor?<sup>1</sup>

Gathering together at this point all that has been presented, are we not justified in the final conclusion that there is nothing in the testimony either of the regenerate consciousness or the religious feelings, or of whatever is properly included in the two terms, nature and life, which indicates that the dogma of future probation ought to be recognized by the Christian Church as an integral part of the evangelical doctrine, or admitted to to any place among the *credenda* of our holy Faith? And in the fact that this conclusion harmonizes exactly with that to which we have been led heretofore, upon both particular and general study of Scripture, upon a careful survey of Christian symbolism, and upon a review of the main principles of orthodox theology, do we not find convincing evidence, not merely that this dogma is no organic part of evangelic Christianity, but also that in many features and aspects it is decisively at variance with the clearest belief and the profoundest convictions and tendencies of Christendom? And, summing up all in one practical declaration, what can we say respecting this dogma but that it is an opinion

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<sup>1</sup>SHEDD, *Doctrine of Endless Punishment*, Chapter III. While admitting that this is the most severe and unwelcome among the tenets of the Christian religion, this author holds that the doctrine maintains itself against the recoil and opposition of the human heart, because it has such sure foothold both in the reason and in the Scriptures. He declares not only that the truth has always retained a place in the fundamental belief of Christendom, but also that it has done this in spite of the constant appeal to human sentiment, because it has rested thus on an immutable basis in both the natural and the Christianized conscience as well as in the Word of God.

to which no countenance should be given, for whose propagation no provision should be made, in whose advocacy no Christian man should be engaged—an opinion not merely erroneous and illusive in itself, but also deleterious whenever carried into practice, and certain sooner or later to bring discord into the councils, and weakness and inefficiency into the practical activities of the Church of God?

The Book of Revelation is not more remarkable for weird imagery, for sublime description, for sweeping prophetic visions, than for the number and character of the hymns which impart such peculiar luster to its mystic pages. The alternation is exceedingly impressive. After each circling exhibition of the divine power and purpose concerning the earth and the human race, one and another glorious anthem of faith and praise ever breaks in upon us with entrancing power and sweetness, in startling contrast with the awful turmoil that precedes it. It is also noticeable, that the celestial melody rises higher and higher, with each new cycle of revelation, until at last it culminates (Chap. xv.) in that transcendent picture of the multitude of the redeemed—an innumerable host—standing as on a sea of glass and fire before the throne, having the harps of God and, as in response to the preceding chorus from the seraphic host, singing together, age on age, the song of Moses and of the Lamb, highest and rarest melody of heaven. And the more thoughtfully we study this series of celestial hymns, thus culminating at length in the ever sweet psalm of redemption, the loftiest aspiration of our hearts must be, that by all earthly experience and meditation and holy nurture we may, under the training of the Word, be fully qualified in faith and life to bear at length some humble part in that eternal chorus. Well

will it be for each, for all, if our views and beliefs on earth are such—if we as Christian men are such in feeling, desire, hope, while on the earth, that we shall be even here attuned into close and loving harmony with that everlasting song; and if we shall thus be made ready on the instant of our entrance on that life of perfected glory, to shout with all the redeemed, and with angels and seraphs innumerable, before the dazzling throne of the Triune Deity :

Great and marvellous are Thy works,  
 O Lord God, the Almighty:  
 Righteous and true are Thy ways,  
 Thou King of the nations!  
 Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord,  
 And magnify Thy Name?

For Thou only art holy;  
 For all the nations shall come and worship before Thee;  
 For Thy righteous acts have been made manifest.

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