

obviated the necessity for the humiliation of the Divine Son in the redemption of mankind? and why not in the same way have prevented all the agonies and inconveniences ever incurred by sin?"\*

Still more difficult is it to conceive that anything in the circumstances or surroundings of a fallen spirit can effect its restoration. Suffering and misery are the result of sin, and while the sin continues the suffering must endure. If sin were to cease the moment the soul entered the spirit world, the idea of exhausting sin's penalty might not appear so hopeless; but if sin perpetuates itself in this life, despite all remedial influences, much more will it do so when all those influences are withdrawn; and thus unending sin carries with it unending suffering as its inevitable corollary. The impenitent sinner goes into "outer darkness," to the "worm" that "dieth not," and to the "fire" that "shall not be quenched;" and even supposing these to be but figures of speech, they are not suggestive of anything that could produce in the sufferers "repentance unto salvation," or create one solitary aspiration after a better life. It may be accepted as an axiom that a thing cannot communicate what it does not possess; and in the surroundings of a lost soul there is nothing that can purify the conscience, or deliver from the guilt of sin.

Nor yet—taking the New Testament for our guide—are we permitted to suppose that a lost soul can, in the other world, be restored through the mediation of Jesus Christ. The inestimable value of that mediation here and now is pressed upon our attention in a thousand ways; but no hint is given that it will avail anything in the world to come. The very urgency of the Gospel message indicates that this life is the crisis-hour of human existence, into the brief compass of which are crowded opportunities that can never return again. If this were not so,—if beyond this life there were even remote possibilities of salvation,—the intensely earnest invitations, warnings and entreaties of the gospel would sound like solemn mockeries. When the one talent was taken from the unprofitable servant, it was never restored; when the hopeless debtor who owed "ten thousand talents" (more than \$8,000,000), "was delivered to the tormentors," it was a sentence of perpetual imprisonment;

\**For Ever*, p. 315.