

of the balance. The tongues of her orators are silent. Her heroes sleep together in the grave, and from all the myriads that wielded her arms, not the twang of a bow string is heard. She forgot God, and her wickedness turned her into the grave, and her fate should be a warning to the nations of the earth, teaching that virtue alone is the rock of defence, the only sure safeguard against national death and a political grave.

Where now are Tyre, and Sidon, and Thebes, and Babylon, that once lifted their proud domes to the skies? They have gone down to the grave and are sleeping in dreamless silence there. The bittern and the owl screech in their palace, and the eagle makes her nest in their ivy walls. Why are they not now blooming as in ancient days? The story is short. They were wicked and they died. Revelling in the glory of their strength, and rioting in luxury and excess, they forgot God and were driven into the grave. I ask, then, is it not true that the wicked and all the nations that forget God, shall be turned into the grave? Thus much for the national aspect of the case.

2. I proceed to consider the subject as it relates to individuals.

I trust my readers have not lived so long in the world without learning that the natural tendency, and the legitimate effect of all wickedness, is to shorten human life and hurry men into the grave. The Scriptures all along, present long life as the reward of virtue. Length of days is in the right hand of wisdom; and of him that heeds God's law, it is said, "With long life will I satisfy him." On the other hand, the word is that the wicked shall not live out half their days. They shall be cut off in the midst of life, and be snared in the works of their own hands. This same lesson is taught in the text, "they shall be driven, turned suddenly into sheol, the grave or state of the dead."

Do you wish for illustrations and proof of this truth? Behold Haman hanging upon the gallows that he built for Mordecai, the Jew. See an ungrateful Absalom on the tree, in the morning of life, and in the bloom of his health and strength. And is it not true that their own wickedness brought them to this untimely end?

These are but instances that illustrate a great truth, a general principle. Its workings here may be more outward and visible, but they are not more certain or sure. There is not one of all the dark catalogue of crimes that darkens the pages of this world's polluted history, the tendency of which is not to shorten human life, and bring man earlier to his grave.—God has so constituted man, that sin is a violation of the laws of his nature, on the healthful operation of which his life depends; and every sin he commits, bears like an incubus upon him, and the accumulated weight that bears heavily upon the constant transgressor, will as certainly crush him into the grave, as there is truth in the experience of man.

Is not the drunkard whirling with a fearful haste down to the grave, and at every step accelerating his speed by his sin? The graves are green around us, and from the mouldering sepulchres of the dead, there comes up a voice echoing the sentiments of the text: "The wicked shall be driven into the grave." He that gives

loose reins to his passions, is in a constant fever, and there is a connexion between the state of the mind and health of the body, so intimate, that not one hurtful passion can be indulged without detriment to the powers of life. Such is the law of nature, and such is the sentiment of the text.

It is very true that, sooner or later, all must go to the grave. But to live a life of sin and misery, and in the midst of years to be cut off by violence, or swing from a gibbet, is one thing. But to live in peace and joy, to a good old age, and then to be gathered to our father's, like a shock of corn fully ripe, with the blessings of children's children upon our heads, is another thing. And I imagine there is some slight difference between the two. I know not how you feel, but for me, I say: Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

But another objector says: I do not see, after all, that it makes much difference; for according to the Universalist doctrine, the man who is cut off in the midst of life, only gets to heaven a little sooner on that account.

Well, let us see how you are willing to test your objection by experiment. You are a Christian, and have no doubt that, should you die now, you would go immediately to heaven; whereas, if you live, you may fall away and be lost. Now suppose we arrest you for murder, and cast you into prison, and finally hang you. It will not make much difference, you know. You will only get to heaven a little sooner; that is all. What say you? would you like to travel that road to heaven? Ah! you say, you are innocent of crime, and would not suffer in that way. Very well. If these things would be fore evils to you, when supported by a consciousness of innocence, what are they to the man who, in addition to the miseries of the prison and the prospect of the gallows, is crushed with the damning sense of guilt, and haunted at noon-day, and in the silence of the dark night, with the voice of blood, coming like Banquo's ghost, that "will not down," and howls in his ears for vengeance? Is his mind at ease? And does his dying bed feel "soft as downy pillows are?"

Let me illustrate a little further: A few years ago, a certain preacher by the name of Avery, was arrested and tried for murder, in one of the northern States.—Many, very many, thought him guilty.—Whether he was or not, God only knows. But I well remember, that the mass of the denomination to which he was attached, thought him innocent, and made all possible efforts to obtain his acquittal, in which they were successful. Now, why did they not act up to the spirit of this objection, which they so often bring against us, and say: We believe Br. Avery to be innocent, and a good Christian; but then we have no objection to his being hung; he will only get to heaven a little sooner, for he will swing from the gallows "right into paradise!"

I regret the necessity of using such plainness; but it is necessary to teach people, that when their own houses are of glass, they should be cautious about casting stones at the windows of their neighbors. The truth is, life, is a blessing to which all men cling with tenacity; and to be cut off in the midst of life and consigned

to an untimely grave, is an evil from which nature shrinks with all her powers. And this is the doom that the text denounces upon the wicked.

2. The term "sheol" is sometimes used figuratively, to denote suffering and misery, here in time.

If you understand the text in this light, it is true. David, who is its author know from his own bitter experience, that the wicked were turned into hell, for he had been there himself. "Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell," is his language. What was that hell from which he had been delivered? I answer, trouble of mind and anguish of spirit that came upon him for his crimes, fearful forebodings of the future, and horrible recollections of the past, come over him, and filled his soul with the sorrows of death.—The thought of the dark deed of which he had been the guilty perpetrator, came upon him; and when Nathan said to him, "thou art the man," then he was in hell; and he praised God that he had delivered him from this lowest hell. Into such a hell as this all the wicked are turned. Men may talk of the pleasures of sin as they will, there is no truth in it; for "there is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." The guilty man becomes his own tormentor; and go where he will, he carries with him the consciousness of his own guilt. He may flee to the ends of the earth, and he will carry it with him. He may dig to its very centre, and seek to bury his crime there; out from the darkness of its tomb it will come up and scourge him with a thong that no fortitude can endure. Into this hell every wicked man is turned.

I have now done with the exposition of the text, and it only remains to disabuse your minds of any erroneous impressions that you may have from its common and popular acceptance.

Often as you hear this passage quoted in the popular preaching of the day, it is a singular fact, that those who quote most, do not themselves believe it, and for this cause, I have made it a principal object of my discourse, to prove it true, literally, and in all its applications. I have said, that those who quote the text most often, do not believe it; and this remark may need an explanation. The minister in the pulpit quotes it; "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God," and contends that here is proof positive of endless misery. Now let us question him a little, and see if he believes it. Who are the wicked? How many of the human family have sinned? Dare you deny that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God? Are you prepared to join issue with the Scriptures, when they assert, that there is "no man that liveth that sinneth not;" that "the Lord looked down from heaven to see if there were any that did understand and seek God, and behold they had all gone out of the way, and there was none that did good—no, not one!" If you are not prepared to deny this, then I affirm, that there is not a son or a daughter of Adam, that has not sinned, and I charge that without exception, they are wicked. Does that preacher believe they will all be turned into hell? Nay, for he expects that multitudes will escape. Then he does not believe the text, as he understands it.

But I must come nearer home, for we are slow of apprehension on this subject. I take the Rev preacher, himself, and ask: Sir, are you, or have you ever been a wicked man? "Oh! yes, says he, at former period of my life, I was a wicked man. Well sir, as you have been a wicked man, upon your own confession, allow me to ask whether you have been turned into hell. Oh! no, hell is not in this world but in the next. I have never been turned into hell, and I hope to escape it. But he is this, my good sir? The text says, "the wicked shall be turned into hell." But you say you have been wicked, and yet you have not been turned into hell, nor do you believe you ever shall be. It is clear as sunlight that you do not believe the text. But, says he, I have repented. And suppose you have; what of that? Will your repentance make God Almighty a liar, or cause him to fail of fulfilling his word? beg you adjust your glasses, and look at that text again. It does not say the wicked shall be turned into hell, unless they repent. But the language is plain and positive. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God. Now, you confess you have been wicked, and say you have not been turned into hell. I will leave you to explain the hell as you please; only remember that whatever it is, whether in this world or the next, you must yourself have a part in it with other wicked people. And thus is the verse preceding our text proved true: "In the net which they hid, is their own foot taken." You may make as many covenants with death, and agreements with hell, as you please. The word is, "they shall not stand," for the everdawning scourge shall pass by, and the hail shall sweep them away. Explain the text as you please; but do not forget, that "with what measure you mete, it shall be measured unto you again," and be assured that God will not alter his government to suit your case, but he will treat you just as he treats other wicked people—turn them into hell for their wickedness. If that hell is a place of endless torment in another world, then you must be content to share its pains with those upon whom you denounce them.

There is one idea more to which I wish to direct your attention, and I shall have done. It is, that under any construction of the passage, it affords no proof of endless suffering. There is no word said of its duration, nor is there any hint from which we have a right to presume that it will be endless. On the contrary, there is no truth more clearly taught, in the Scriptures, than the destruction of this hell, or sheol. "Oh! death, I will be thy plagues. Oh! grave, (sheol) I will be thy destruction." The common idea, that there can be no deliverance from hell, has no support from Scripture. But the promise is: "I will redeem them from death. I will ransom them from the grave, (sheol)." So it is clear that whatever construction you may put upon the term "sheol," or "hell," in the text, it affords no countenance whatever to the doctrine of endless torments; because the place itself is to be destroyed; utterly destroyed; and God himself has promised that he will ransom from its power.

The great moral lesson taught in the text, and which I desire my readers to