

## SERMON.

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Isaiah viii : 20. "To the law and to the testimony ; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

The question of the eternal punishment of the wicked, is just now exciting a little interest in our midst. The controversy has been thrust upon us. I have no desire, for the mere sake of controversy, to enter upon the discussion of this subject ; and would not do so at present, were it not for the circumstances, in which we are placed, as a congregation. Probably universalism is numerically stronger in our town, in proportion to its population, than it is in any other part of the Province. Our principles therefore are likely to be frequently assailed by the advocates of this dangerous and deadly error, and hence the greater necessity that we be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us, regarding the doctrine of Scripture on this question, as most surely believed among us.

The subject is one that is overwhelmingly momentous, and inexpressibly solemn. It involves some of the most affecting aspects of God's moral government. On such a theme it becomes us all, therefore, to speak with the deepest reverence, and the greatest humility, and carefully avoid the bitterness of controversy. But instead of this, what do we sometimes see and hear ? Man, weak, sinful, short-sighted man, daringly rushing into the region of these awful and mysterious truths, and irreverently asserting, what the Almighty can or cannot do, in connection therewith ; positively maintaining that the Eternal Being *must* act in a certain way, and in no other, to preserve the integrity and consistency of his moral character ; going indeed so far as to declare, that if the Bible could be proved to contain the doctrine of eternal punishment, that in itself would be sufficient reason for them to cast it aside.

Let us endeavour, however, to come to the discussion reverently, honestly accepting the utterances of God's word upon the subject. It is clearly, one of the questions which God himself must decide, and if he has spoken, it is surely our duty, seriously and earnestly to enquire into his utterances. For what value is the book of truth to us, if it is not employed to regulate our faith in divine verities ? And where is