

IS THERE A HELL?

AN ENQUIRY AND AN ANSWER.

I.—PRELIMINARY

If you will open your atlas at the map of Africa, you will observe, at the westward of the Nile River and Tanganyika Lake, an extensive tract of country marked "Unexplored." The map shows no mountains, no rivers, no lakes, simply because no one knows what is there. It is "unexplored." But Stanley is on his way back to America. If, on his arrival, he should announce that, in the centre of that hitherto unknown territory, he had discovered a great lake, to which on account of its dismal surroundings, he had given some name of fearful omen, if such an announcement would be made by him, two things would certainly follow.

1. All map-makers would henceforth indicate a lake in that region.

2. It would become known to every schoolboy by the name which Stanley gave it.

There is another land, to us all "unexplored,"—the geography of which has never been written by mortals,—the land of the Hereafter. But, eighteen hundred years ago, there came to earth One who knew every rood of that territory, and who declared that somewhere within its boundaries is a Lake of such awful characteristics that he named it "Hell," and bade us go not near it. Now the common-sense of mankind insists upon two things here.

1. In all our maps of that country, we must somehow indicate that Lake.

2. It must be known by the name which Christ gave it—the Lake of Hell.

We may not be able to give its precise location, but the failure to give the exact latitude and longitude of a place does not prove its non-existence. Jesus Christ, and He alone, is able to inform us whether there be such a Lake; and if he affirms it, that must some-time end all controversy as to its existence. By general consent the Theological World is to-day asking this question: What does the Bible teach us about Hell? It is a question freighted with the eternal interests of all souls. With solemn minds, and hearts uplifted for divine illumination, let us seek for an answer.

Webster's unabridged Dictionary gives the following definition of the word "Hell."

1. "The place of the dead, or of souls after death; the lower regions, or the grave; called in Hebrew *Sheol*, and by the Greeks *Hades*."

2. "The place of punishment for the wicked after death; the abode of evil spirits."

Commonly we employ the word in this secondary sense, but both meanings are allowable, and frequent in English. Are the Hebrew and Greek words, for which "hell" stands as equivalent, employed in the same way in the Scriptures? "Search and look." There are three words rendered into English by the word "hell," which we purpose to examine very carefully.

These are (1) *Sheol*—pure Hebrew—found only in the Old Testament; (2) *Hades*—pure Greek—found in the New Testament; (3) *Gee-Hinnom*—a compound word—found in this form in the Old Testament, and occurring in the New Testament, in the proper Grecized form, *Gehenna*.*

In examining these words, if anywhere, we shall get light; for this problem as to the existence of hell is first and last a question of philology—a study of the meaning of words.

* We omit all discussion of the word *Tartarus*, rendered in 2 Pet. ii. 4, "cast down to hell," as it occurs nowhere else, and when taken in connection with the context presents no difficulties. The meaning of the term "Tartarus" will be explained in the discussion of *Hades*.

II.—SHEOL.

This word occurs sixty-four times in the Old Testament. Thirty times it is translated by the English word "grave;" three times by the word "pit," meaning the same as the grave; and thirty-one times by the word "hell."

An example of the first rendering is seen in Gen. xxxvii. 35, where Jacob said, concerning the supposed death of Joseph, "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." An example of the second is found in Num. xvi. 32, where it is said of Korah and his com-

pany, "They, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed over them, and they perished from among the congregation." An instance of the third rendering is seen in Ps. xvi. 10, where David represents Christ as saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;" i.e., say all commentators, thou wilt not leave me in the grave, nor suffer thy consecrated Messiah to consume, or to be turned to corruption there. In other words thou wilt raise me from the dead, before the grave exercises the power of corruption over me. So Peter construes the passage in Acts, and applies it to the resurrection of Christ from the grave.

Observe, in the first example "the grave represents *Sheol*;" in the second example "the pit" stands for *Sheol*; in the third example "hell" is put for *Sheol*. Of course "the grave," "the pit," and "hell," means one and the same thing here. And this is true of all the sixty-four instances in which *Sheol* occurs. It never means "hell" in the sense in which we commonly use that word; i.e., to designate a place of future misery. Professor Moses Stuart, of Andover, speaking of the word *Sheol*, says it means commonly, (in fifty-nine cases out of sixty-four) "the underworld, the region of the dead, the grave, the sepulchre, the region of ghosts or departed spirits." And though Mr. S. thinks there are five passages* in which the word may hint at something beyond the grave, still he says that to assert this as more than "probable," would be "somewhat hazardous." (Future Punishment.)

Against the supposition that the Old Testament writers ever meant by using the word *Sheol* to designate a place of future retribution, stands this incontrovertible fact; viz., they had no clear knowledge of rewards or punishments in a future life. Their motives to obedience were all drawn from this world. The rewards and punishments of the Mosaic law were all temporal. Obedience was to be followed by prosperity; disobedience by adversity. The blessing of obedience to law were long life, fruitful fields, success in battle, the possession of a land flowing with milk and honey. The curses for disobedience were premature death, weakness and terror in the presence of their enemies, blighting, mildew and famine. Undoubtedly they believed in a future life, but their notions respecting it were of the vaguest sort. They conceived of *Sheol* as a place deep, (Job. xi. 8.), and dark, (Job. xi. 21, 22,) having within it depths on depths (Prov. ix. 18), and fastened with gates (Isa. xxxviii. 10) and bars (Job. xvii. 16). It was all devouring, (Prov. i. 13; xxx. 16,) insatiable (Isa. v. 14), and remorseless (Cant. viii. 6),—precisely such thoughts as we commonly associate with the grave,—but it had no reference to the happiness or misery of the dead.†

Against the supposition that the translators of the Old Testament meant by using the word "hell" to indicate a place of future retribution, stands this fact; viz., the word "hell" did not then (A.D. 1611) have the exclusive meaning which we commonly attach to it. The proof of this is seen in the so-called Apostle's Creed, where it is said that Christ, after his crucifixion, "descended into hell." Of course it does not mean that our Lord went to a place of torment, but rather that he entered the realm of death.‡ Webster says the word "hell" is derived from the Anglo Saxon *helan*, to cover or conceal. To cover a thing was at first called "helling" it. Even now in Cornwall this ancient meaning is retained, and the slating of a house is there termed "helling." In Lancashire the covers of books are still called the "helling." This notion of covering or concealment, then, was the more common one expressed by the word "hell" in the time of James I., and when put by our translators to represent the Hebrew *Sheol* it did not present it accurately, and meant simply the grave, or the realm of the dead, as covered, hid, concealed from mortal eyes. But two centuries are sufficient for any word to acquire a different meaning from what it had first; and so it came to pass that we, importing our modern sense of the word into the Old Testament, think we read of "hell" as a place of torment, when

it only means the place or region of the dead.

We conclude, then, that the Orthodox doctrine concerning a place of future retribution for the wicked does not rest upon the word *Sheol*, nor upon the word "hell," employed by the translators to represent it. It is more than probable that by *Sheol* the Hebrews understood simply the realm of the dead, without any reference to their happiness or misery; and it is eminently probable that the translators meant by using the word "hell" to represent the same idea. Had the doctrine of future retribution no firmer support than the word *Sheol*, we should discard it instantly and forever.

* We are far from saying the Hebrews had no hopes or fears of the future. Such passages as Ps. xi. 5, 6; Isa. iii. 11, xxxiii. 14; Ps. xxvii. 9; Isa. lxvi. 24; Ps. lxxiii. 24-26, and others, indicate that they had vague notions concerning it, but no clear views; especially they had no clear conception of a place of retribution. So John, Milman, and most scholars.

† If *Sheol* were to be taken to represent any but a general idea of the future, we should agree with Poole, that it "far more often signifieth the place of the blessed, whither the saints and patriarchs went when they died, than the place whither sinners went."

‡ Job. xxi. 13. Ps. ix. 17. Prov. v. 5; ix. 18; xxiii. 14. The reader will bear in mind that it requires some ingenuity to discover the probability above alluded to in these passages.

§ We are aware that some have tried to make out that Christ did really descend to hell, the place of torment. But the absurd idea is based upon an utterly absurd interpretation of 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20, or on an exploded and generally abandoned theory of the Atonement.

III.—HADES.

This Greek word, translated "hell" in the New Testament, next claims our attention. It is universally allowed among critics and theologians that this word is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew *Sheol*, of which we have just treated. Of course, then, it does not mean "hell" in the sense of a place of retribution. It occurs in the New Testament only eleven times. It is ten times translated "hell," and is once rendered "grave,"—in the expression, "O grave, where is thy victory?"

Before examining the passages where it occurs, let us see if we can find what the common usage of the word was in the time of our Lord's sojourn on earth. Fortunately we have all the light needed at this point.

The term *Hades* was borrowed from the old Grecian mythology, and was the name of one of its gods. It was there taught that the three sons of Saturn were Hades, Jupiter and Neptune. Saturn had formerly ruled over all things; but in the division of the kingdom among his sons, Jupiter was made ruler of the air, and Neptune ruler of the sea, while to Hades was given dominion of the underworld, the grave, the place of the dead, the realm of departed spirits.*

Naturally the name of the mythical god *Hades* came in time to represent also the place over which he was supposed to rule, and when the myth died out from men's minds, the name *Hades* remained to indicate the abode of the dead.

But this realm of death had its divisions, or compartments, into one or other of which according to their fitness, all souls went. The part assigned to the wicked was called Tartarus; (2 Pet. ii. 4,) that of the righteous was named Elysium; while *Hades* was the general term for the realm including both Elysium and Tartarus. When the Jews came to use the Greek language, as they had done before, and continued to after, the birth of our Saviour, they naturally employed, to express their ideas of the spirit world, the terms which the Greeks had used to express their ideas of the same place. Hence *Hades* meant to the Jews in Christ's time just what was meant to the Greeks (and just what *Sheol* meant to the Hebrews in the Old Testament times)—the world of the dead, the abode of departed souls. And as the Greeks divided *Hades* into two parts so did the Jews.† Professor Townsend in substance quoting Josephus, says: "The ancient Greeks and the Jews divided *Hades* into two parts, one division being the temporary abode of the righteous, the other that of the wicked; the first or upper part, was a place of happiness, though not necessarily of judicial rewards; the other a place of suffering, though not of judicial punishment." (Lost forever.)

This is all in the intermediate state prior to the resurrection and the judgment. (Josephus.) After the judgment, that part of *Hades* known as Paradise, (so called after the exile) where Christ promised to meet the penitent thief, and where Abraham and Lazarus are consciously existing, will be merged in what is known as the New Jerusalem,—or Heaven proper,—which shall descend from God, and into which the righteous will be welcomed; (Rev. xxi. 1-7. Mat. xxv. 34) while that part of *Hades* where the wicked are now confined, will be merged into the ultimate place of judicial punishment,—into Gehenna, or hell proper,—amid the closing scenes of the judgment.‡

We are now prepared to look at some of the passages in which *Hades* is found rendered into English by the word "hell."

In Matt. xvi. 18 we read, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." *Hades* is the word rendered "hell," and the obvious meaning is that the church shall never see death, shall never cease to exist. In Matt. xi. 23, Christ declares that Capernaum, which, on account of his residence there, had been exalted to heaven in point of privilege, should also be brought down to "hell," where evidently the word means destruction; for certainly the city had not been lifted to heaven, nor did it ever after come down to hell, in the sense in which we use those terms. Rev. vi. 8 has the words: "And I looked, and behold, a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." "Hell" here is simply *Hades*, the realm of the dead, and the imagery employed is that of a terrible warrior going forth to kill, and send men to the spirit world. And so of all the eleven instances in which the word *Hades* occurs, it invariably means the region of the dead, or the abode of departed spirits, without any reference to their happiness or misery. It is precisely equivalent to *Sheol* among the Hebrews, and never means "hell" in the sense of a place of final retribution.

The Orthodox doctrine concerning future retribution does not rest upon this word *Hades*, nor upon the term "hell" which represents it in English.‡ If it had no firmer base than this, we should discard the doctrine at once and forever, and cry anathemas upon the men who teach it.

* So we personify Death, and speak of him as the King of terrors.

† It is remarkable how little the gospel introduced new symbols. The eucharist, the church, baptism, &c., are all based upon some well-known usage, but lifted into a higher meaning. So it is with the use of words, as we shall see further on.

‡ Rev. xx. 13, 14. Matt. xxv. 41. Townsend, slightly changed.

§ We are not unmindful of Luke xvi. 23. *Hades* is the term here used, and Dives is said to be in torment. But obviously he was not yet in Gehenna fire. He was not utterly abandoned, as the request concerning his brethren indicates. He was simply enduring the normal consequences of a life of sin. Lazarus is represented in that part of *Hades* called Paradise, while the general term is used to designate the place of the rich man. Dives was not in hell, the place of final retribution. (Townsend, in "Lost Forever.")

(To be Continued.)

THE MOON OF MARS.

It is only with a very powerful telescope that any one can hope to see these additional members of the solar system. Even with the best instruments they appear only as faint points of light. It is, therefore, scarcely possible to say any thing definitely about their size; but it is evident, by comparison, that they must be much smaller than any of the minor planets, which have hitherto been discovered. One astronomer says that although the diameter of the Martian moons can not be measured, yet "one may safely agree to ride round between two successive meals, or to walk round one in easy stages, during a very brief vacation."

When Mars was favorably situated for observation in 1830, Madler so closely scrutinized it that he concluded that no satellite more than twenty miles in diameter could exist without his having discovered it. The satellites just discovered are much smaller than this, and probably the diameter of each is less than ten miles. Taking this maximum diameter the surface of one of these moons would not be much greater than an area of two hundred and eighty square miles. In fact the moons of Mars are the most diminutive heavenly bodies yet discovered. While it is at present impossible to determine their magnitude, it is easy to say something about their distance. It is believed

that the outer satellite is situated at a distance of about twelve thousand miles from the surface of Mars, while the inner satellite is at a distance of about three thousand five hundred miles. The outer moon revolves around Mars in about thirty and one-quarter hours; but the inner one completes its revolution in less than eight hours. Hence the Martians, if there be any, must see the moon rise and set twice in the course of a single night; but what is more curious, its motion must be from west to east, and not as such motions usually appear, from east to west. This arises from the great rapidity with which the satellites travel; its motion in one direction being much greater than the apparent motion of the heavens in the opposite direction.

JOSEPH COOK.

It would be amusing to notice the changes in public sentiment, were not the occasion sometimes serious. Throughout last year, except in certain both intellectual and sectional circles, the Monday lectures of Joseph Cook met with more than favorable notices throughout the press. Two or three strong adverse criticisms, partly as to the lecturer's style and taste, but chiefly from specialists as to points pertaining to their particular field of observation, have lately been put forth; and now it "begins to thunder all along the line." It is the fashion at this moment to speak disparagingly of both Mr. Cook's matter and manner. The extraordinary abilities of this remarkable man are quite overlooked, in his magnified weaknesses, eccentricities and peculiarities. It seems to be forgotten that he has been setting forth a Christian philosophy amid divergent, opposing, and unsettled theories; that he is an orator, not a writer, and is from the nature of his position advocate rather than a student, or teacher of Christian science. He has his own theological views, in general well harmonized with orthodox evangelism; but still tinged with his own peculiarity of thought. He has read widely, has a marvellous memory and a wonderful dramatic and magnetic power. He has accomplished a great work for truth. He is not, probably, the commissioned prophet to reconcile all our contending theologies and philosophies; but he does stand bravely forth, and contends with a force that is felt, for the harmony of revealed truth with the "nature of things." It is easier to criticize him than to point out another man who could, with such an audience, for such a period, accomplish so much.—*Zion's Her.*

THE ADVANTAGES OF POVERTY.—The

worst thing that can happen a young man in college is to have a father and mother so injudicious as to keep him amply supplied with pocket money. It is fatal to all studious habits, and in the end generally fatal to good morals. This is equally the case with a young man in business who is made to feel that to him "salary is no object"—that a wealthy father's purse is always open to his most extravagant demands. Nothing develops a young man like fighting his own way in the world. Some spur of necessity, some bracing air of adverse surroundings is needful to most men, if they are to put forth their whole power. The rich man's heir, nursed and petted from infancy, and shielded from battling with the world, never fairly learns to stand erect and walk alone. If by any chance he is stripped of his inherited wealth, and has to give and take hard knocks like others, he nearly always goes under in the struggle—at any rate he seldom regains by his own efforts the fortune he has lost.

OBITUARY.

NATHANIEL P. HUGHES.

Died at Diligent River, Parraboro, Dec. 18, 1877, Nathaniel P. Hughes, in the 77th year of his age. Bro. Hughes was converted to God in his twenty-ninth year, the sudden death of a companion while at work in an adjoining mill being the circumstance which under God led to his conversion. He soon after united with the Methodist Church, retaining his connection therewith unto the close of life. He was strongly attached to Methodism in its doctrines and usages, and when able, liberally supported the enterprises of the church. During the later years of his life he was called to pass through great trials, yet in all was enabled to rejoice in the abiding presence of "the friend that sticketh closer than a brother."

His death was peaceful and triumphant. A short time previous to that event the writer administered to him the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The devout and earnest manner in which he engaged in this service evidenced the reality of a ripening faith, and a preparation for the full union with the Saviour in whom, though as yet unseen, he had believed. A large gathering attended his remains to their last resting place, showing the respect in which he was held by all.

R. A. D.

Parraboro, March 7, 1878.