The Possible Future.

BY REV. E. W. COOX, MANSFIELD.

A letter recently received by the writer from a youthful correspondent, contained among other and similar expressions, the following: "Thank God! I have more faith in His love than to think of an endless Hell." The reply was as follows:

I see from several expressions in your letter that you belong to that large class, both in the church and out of it, who assume that the doctrine of endless punishment is intrinsically absurd, and is therefore not in the Bible.

Now to approach such a one with mere Bible statements is useless; for the entire case is prejudged by him before the Bible is reached. I conclude, therefore, to call your attention to some things *outside* of the Bible which may have been overlooked in reaching the conclusions you have.

1. Perhaps, for one thing, you may have too much overlooked the relation of God to us as Moral Governor, and have thought of Him *only* as a loving Father. He has indeed poured out His loving heart with infinite intensity on this world, and would do only this, if men would but love Him, as they should in return. He could then be a God *all* smiles and tenderness as you picture Him; and would then find no necessity for the infliction of suffering. But as a matter of fact, though "He doth not afflict willingly," yet He still *does* afflict terribly, even here in this world; and so we have to accept the fact that a loving God can yet inflict terrible suffering, and will do it to any extent that necessity requires. I know God is a loving Father, and you, as you say, have "faith in His love, and cannot indeed overate it; but He is also the great Moral Governor of the universe, and the responsible Guardian of its welfare. Furthermore His subjects have sinned against Him, and rebelled against His authority, and refused to love and serve Him. They even blaspheme His name, and despise His word, and desecrate His Sabbath, and live prayerless and godless lives. And now, what, as a Moral Governor, He ought to do with such, and *must* with them, become a serious and tremendous matter. It should be remembered that it is a terrible thing to sin against the Almighty, and break His laws, and be careless of His goodness, and never thank Him for His favors, and even treat Him with the neglect and contempt that many do. For if they should just carry out their wickedness—if God should only let them have their own way without restraint; if He should just let sin alone, and let it work out itself unchecked, it would desolate His universe. He has only to leave it unrestrained, and it would eventually make the whole universe a hell to which the hell of the Bible would be a comparative insignificant matter.

I say, therefore, that what God shall *do* with such wicked ones in order to protect His moral system properly, is a tremendous question, and one which has been too much left out of your thinking. The question is a fair one—What shall be *done* with such? How shall they be managed and controlled, and their wickedness restrained? Especially, how shall they be so dealt with as to make them a warning and an example to others, in order to keep this apostasy from spreading. A righteous Moral Governor must treat sin as it deserves, and what it deserves is measured by the welfare of the universe it assails, and the danger it threatens, and the mischief it is liable to occasion. Which leads me to notice

2. That you have also perhaps overlooked in your thinking too much, the magnitude of the interests which sin is assaiting, and which God has to protect against it. Very likely you have thought only of this comparatively insignificant world, and have left out of the account the probability of a universe eternally expanding. Please think—Why should Omnipotence ever diminish its activity? If God has begun to create moral beings, why should he not continue to? No reason whatever appears why God who has begun to create both mind and matter, should ever *cease* in His work. No man of life and energy and enterprise ever stops working while the ability to work continues. Why should the Almighty ever cease in His work and give up employment? And if he should not, then the moral universe is to expand internally. And doubtless the peopling of worlds on worlds with moral intelligencies will be the ceaseless work of the unending future, so that we are facing the tremendous fact not only of an eternal, but an eternally expanding universe of moral beings endless in duration, boundless in embracement.

And here the mind pauses a moment thinking what stupendous foundations of moral government must be laid adequately to sustain such a superstructure. And the thought arises that if the foundations of Law and Penalty should turn out to be so massive as to be *endless*, the solution of the matter will be found in this—that God is building so vast a universe, and laying the foundations of a government over it that must stand the strain of eternity, which leads me to notice

3. That this matter of Law and Penalty may also have been too much overlooked in your thinking. The Law, you remember, as our Saviour gives it, is comprehended in this—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbor as thyself." Now please notice that this Law is as fundamental and far reaching as the universe itself. No moral being can be created, and come into social relations, without at once coming under its requirements. No world can ever be peopled without becoming at once amenable to it; and should the material universe expand eternally, and all be crowded at length with free intelligent mind, this one Law must govern all. This shows the measureless value of this Law. It is all that holds an eternal universe of mind to God and holiness and happiness.

How now about the Penalty that sustains this Law? You understand that law *without* penalty degenerates into mere advice, and is no law, and good for nothing in the line of government. But let that pass. You object to *Penalty* and think God is too good to make it endless. Very well, suppose then that it be dispensed with entirely, and that God should threaten nothing for the contempt of Him and His government—that there should be *no penalty*. Then, as law and government are the most vivid expression of the character of the Lawgiver, and the exact utterance of His will and pleasure, God would say to His subjects in effect—You may do as you please. I *advise* you to love me and your neighbor, but you may do as you please about it. You may love or hate me, or you may love or hate each other, it is all the same to me. You may even treat me with open contempt, but I shall take no notice of it, or, at least, not notice it with particular displeasure. He would thus treat both holiness and sin alike, showing an indifference to both. What a position for the God of holiness to occupy before His universe! He would thus ruin His authority. Who would be concerned about doing the will of a Lawgiver, from whom, to say the least, obedience had nothing to hope, and disobedience nothing to fear? Who would respect His character or His will? He would stand before His universe convicted of indifference to obedience, and an unconcerned spectator of disobedience, and would thus tempt His subjects to war on each other and on Him, and so defeat the great and sole end of moral government—the preservation of the general welfare. The doctrine of no penalty is, therefore, an utter absurdity.

Next, suppose He should threaten only limited and temporary Penalty. Then this will become the exact expression of His regard for His Law, His Government and Himself, and of the estimate He puts upon the value of His endless universe.

First, He would say, in effect, that His regard for Himself—for His own infinite honor and glory and worth was susceptible of finite measurement; even that he had only a limited amount of *self-respect*. What an exhibition of Himself to make before His universe—thus to be little Himself in their estimation!

Next, it would show just how much He valued the happiness and welfare of the endless universe of moral being, and that He had only a limited and temporary concern about it, and cared only to a limited and temporary degree whether it was desolated by sin or not. And this would be impossible; for God estimates things as they are, and does not thus underrate the welfare and value of an endless universe of moral beings.

Also, it would show an inferior and limited regard for *holiness* itself—the crowning glory of His own spotless character; and this would be an infinite falsehood, proclaiming to His universe that His regard for holiness was susceptible of finite measurement, when it is not and cannot be.

Also it would fail to correspond with the value of obedience and the mischief of sin. The value of obedience in an endless universe cannot be measured, and the mischief of sin in it cannot be measured. As I have already said, if left to itself it would make the universe a hell; and this fact must be fully recognized in the great and perfect moral government of Jehovah, and sin must be dealt with accordingly, and its progress stayed at all hazards, and at any and every conceivable sacrifice necessary.

Which leads to another fact to be considered—That as sin has already invaded God's universe, so it will apparently keep on unless in some way arrested by the Almighty. How shall this be done? We have no right to assume that mere limited and temporary penalty would *ever* stay its progress; and even the strong probability is that, in an endless universe, nothing but *endless penalty* would stop it—that this is the only adequate infliction—the only degree of penalty that will effectually meet and arrest its ravages—so that any thing less than this would be insufficient and useless, and, therefore, that such penalty is benevolent even on the ground of human reason, being indispensable, and even inseparable from the existence and progress of the endless universe.

At least, no man is competent to affirm that this would not be the certain result of limited penalty, that it would fail to arrest the spread of rebellion, and so leave the entire universe to writhe eternally under its malignant and merciless bondage. And here let it be remembered, that the endless suffering of all the sinners in God's dominions who will finally be punished, would only be to the misery of *unrestrained* rebellion, as a drop to the ocean in comparison.

Be sure, therefore, God loves His universe too well to let it be eternally ravaged by sin unrestrained; and therefore, the plain doctrine of the Bible that He will restrain it, and restrain it effectually, and even keep it down by an *endless* pressure if necessary, is not, after all, so very unreasonable as you seem to imagine. Please think over this whole matter carefully and candidly, and especially ask the Good Saviour to show you what He meant when uttering the language He does in the 25th of Matthew. Our Saviour did not utter language lightly, and it is a solemn and awful question what He *did* mean when uttering the closing verse of that chapter. Please ponder it seriously and earnestly.

— A short time since a man came rushing into the railway station, and while scarcely able to gasp for breath he took his seat in the car just as the train was about to start.

"You've run it fine," said a fellow passenger.

"Yes," replied he, breathing heavily, after every two or three words, "but I've saved four hours, and that's well worth running for."

"Saved four hours." "Four hours well worth that earnest struggle! What of eternity? What of eternity?" Yet are there not thousands of shrewd, far seeing men to-day who look sharply enough after the interests in this life, but who seem stone blind to the eternity before them? What of eternity, dear reader? —*The Moravian.*

— THIS IS THE WAY IT WORKS.—The *Inquirer* tells of a Presbyterian brother who was "down" on close communion and who, knowing of an unworthy member of a Baptist church, urged that he be disciplined. The following Sunday he was at the Methodist church, where the general invitation was given to the Supper. The Presbyterian accepted it and among those who participated was the excluded Baptist, and in speaking of the matter this Presbyterian brother said, "I favored his dismissal from the Baptists as unworthy, and yet by my attitude as a free communionist I pronounced him as worthy of a seat at the table —*Central Baptist.*

An Agent at Large.

Some one hears that the Widow Brown is absolutely destitute of coal just as a severe spell of weather is setting in; so he goes and tells the minister. Some one else knows the case of husband and wife, in a remote part of the town, who do not agree very well, and whose differences are a scandal to the neighborhood; so he goes and tells the minister. A young man has come to town in quest of employment. Everybody to whom he applies sends him to the minister. Somebody wishes to institute inquiries as to his deceased mother's aunt, who formerly lived near the town. Refer him to the minister. In fact, it seems to me that, if the minister wished to put up a sign which would aptly and justly describe his duties, he might write upon his door, Rev. A. B., unpaid agent at large for the members of the human race, and incidentally pastor of the Melchisedec church."

Now, with this view of the minister's relations to the community I am quite unable to agree. If the minister acts on this view, where will he be? Suppose he does all these things, and then comes home and sits up all night to write his sermons, and to do the legitimate work for his church. In a few years there will be a funeral, and the people will say one to another, in surprised and saddened tones: "Mysterious Providence! So useful as he was, so young, too, and leaving such an interesting family!" Mysterious, indeed, that, after a few years of working all day and not sleeping all night, and getting his meals on the fly, he should have been gathered to his fathers!

If he does this work for the community, and takes his natural rest, there will be little left for the pulpit or church, and presently, when somebody asks, "What sort of a man is the minister?" everybody will reply, in a patronizing, pitying tone: "Well, well, he is a *good* sort of man, always ready to do anybody a good turn, but not much of a preacher; and I do not think the people will hire him much longer.

My idea is that the pastor owes his first work and his best work to the church which has called him. The church has the first claim upon him. This should take precedence of all else. And he does his most valuable service to the community by holding up before his people the high morality and the exalted benevolence of the Gospel, so that every family under his ministry, and still more, every man, woman, and child, shall be a centre of light, from whom shall radiate an influence for purity, for goodness, for charity, for intelligent piety.—*Dr. H. L. Wayland.*

About Sunday-Schools.

BY R. S. MACARTHUR, D. D.

Comparatively few of the children in our Sunday-schools attend the services in our churches. A generation ago the proportion of children in attendance was much greater than it is to-day. There were churches then whose galleries were filled each Sunday morning with children who marched in a body with their teachers from the school-room into the church. These were sights fitted to gladden the hearts of saints and angels; but in most of our churches to-day children are conspicuous only by their absence. Their presence would confound Satan, alarm ushers, agitate parents, gladden preachers and glorify Christ. One of our city pastors, for the purpose of encouraging the children to come, has the number present counted each Sunday, and occasionally announced in the Sunday-school in the afternoon. He sometimes asks at the session of the school the scholars who were present at the morning service to raise the right hand. This test is often a severe rebuke to some of the older boys and girls. This absence of the children from the house of God is an alarming fact; it augurs ill for both church and state. The habit of attending the public services of God's house, considered simply as a habit, is valuable in many ways. It, at least, keeps the children from idleness or wickedness at home or on the street; but it will do far more. Even though they may understand but little, the habit produces sympathy with truth, religious reverence, and greatly helps to lay the foundation of a thoroughly Christian character. It ought also to be understood that children understand much more than most of us imagine. Truths come to me now which I learned in the house of God when but five years old. They lie dormant until some strange law of association causes them to flash before me in the crisis of life. Frequently a glorious passage of Scripture comes to me with marvelous power which I heard consciously when between five and six years old. The preacher was the beloved and now sainted Dr. Robert Boyd; the place was the Baptist church in Dalesville, Canada; the Scripture was, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," etc. I can still see the speaker's head above the high, old-fashioned pulpit; and still hear his clear, sweet voice. Seven years later the Spirit taught me more fully the meaning of that love and the blessedness of that sonship; but the words never faded from the memory, and never ceased to sing their tender and joyous song in the soul.

For them especially are church-going habits important. Many such children have no relation to religious services except in the Sunday-school. Even while they attend the school the devil has an immense advantage over the teacher. In some cases one hundred and sixty-seven hours each week are given to Satan, and but one hour is given to the Bible and to God. Like other children they soon get the idea that they are "too big" to attend Sunday-school. The leave, go out into the great world, and soon all religious ties are severed. They never learned to go to the house of God; they certainly are not likely to learn now. They have been graduated from the only religious influence they have ever been under; and they are now matriculated into the devil's school without any "conditions," and with any number of "options," but all under his training. Many of the unchurched who were unearthed during Mr. Moody's meeting in this city were at some time Sunday-school scholars. But grant that this result may not follow, they still ought to come to church while members of the school for the sake of its great advantages. Many teachers, we rejoice to know, are quite competent; but, it must be admitted, that in some schools, many are utterly incompetent. Some are naturally not "apt to teach." Some have but little time, but few books and little encouragement at home to prepare for teaching the lessons. The result is that many truths are not taught at all, others are distorted, and sometimes untruths are taught. A great deal of nonsense is sometimes piously punched into the childish brain. Even when the teaching in the Sunday school is as nearly perfect as can be expected, the pulpit is able symmetrically to supplement and greatly to adorn that teaching with the higher truths of the gospel of Christ.

If the children do not attend the service some one is to blame. Who is it? This is a fair question. Probably several persons ought to share the blame. Sometimes the child may be to blame; often the parents are. The parents of some of the children never go themselves; and some who do take no pains to have the children attend. Often the parents stand in the way of the conversion of their children; this is true occasionally in the case even of Christian parents. Blame must be given to some of the teachers: They unconsciously, perhaps, sometimes promulgate the heresy that the Sunday school is the children's church. Nothing could be more fallacious than such teaching. Some teachers are not themselves regular in their attendance; indeed, they are regular in their absence from the Sunday evening services.—*Christian Enquirer.*

The Old Testament Scriptures---The Perfect Word of God.

The character of Christ is staked upon it. On the lowest computation of infidelity itself, it is the testimony of a good man. The very scoffers at revelation admit the goodness, the honesty, the unquestionable integrity, the perfect character of Christ. He is an unimpeachable witness. They who reject every other part of divine revelation, receive without hesitation, as true, the Word of Jesus. They admit that Christ was goodness incarnate, truth and love without mixture and without deception. But here is the testimony of such a being, the personification and example of uprightness and goodness to the race, as to His own rule of life and conduct, as to the infallible perfection of that rule, and as to its supreme and perfect, unquestioned and unquestionable authority over all mankind. An absolute, unhesitating regard to it and obedience of it are presented as the principle of his own character, the inflexible determination of his own conduct in all things; and he declares that what it was for him, it is and must be for all mankind their sole authoritative rule.

Now, if this testimony is not true, the Lord Jesus knew it, and consequently you have this acknowledged, trustworthy, and good being, the admitted personification and example of all goodness, basing His whole life upon a lie, setting out in his public ministry of self-denying and suffering benevolence, with the proclamation of a known enormous falsehood as the foundation of it, and the authority for it, and endeavoring to impose the same falsehood upon the whole human race. But this deception, this huge, vast swindle is inconsistent with the lowest supposition of any goodness and honesty whatever in the being who, under such solemn circumstances, on such a stupendous theatre and compass, publishes this testimony. The Old Testament Scriptures must therefore be received as the perfect Word of God, or this witness, though acknowledged to be the most perfect example of goodness and truth, is infinitely deceitful and wicked, the Alpha and Omega of falsehood, imposing under the guise and influence of assumed goodness, the greatest of all possible forgeries, an uninspired, imperfect, human production, as the authoritative revelation of Jehovah for mankind.—*Rev. Geo. B. Cheever, D. D., in March Arena.*

Lay Ministry.

Writing on the subject of Lay Ministry in New York, Dr. Parkhurst, of Madison Avenue Presbyterian church, says: "We have had in this city two or three very marked illustrations of the way in which laymen who have been converted from habits of alcoholism are able to effect the conversion of men of their own class. Now that is an example of a principle that admits of vastly wider application. If a converted drunkard is the best man to convert drunkards, a converted artisan is the best man to convert artisans, a converted physician is the best man to convert physicians; and so of lawyers, bankers, brokers, merchants, and the rest. The fact is, and we may as well confess it, that the clergyman practically makes a business of religion, and that he cannot think and feel in the vernacular of a broker, for instance, any better than a broker can in that of an architect. We are professionally insulated. Whether we realize it or not, the laymen realize it, and discount our pulpit utterances accordingly. While the principle of adaption is being worked in this city at large expenditure of time and money in the interests of inebriates, we are not operating it to any degree worth the mentioning in behalf of these other lines of occupation and strata of society—strata of society, too, that are more worth the saving, because, with some glorious exceptions, worth more after they are saved."—*Selected.*

— We cannot always be sure when we are most useful. It is not the acreage you sow—it is the multiplication which God gives the seed which makes up the harvest. You have less to do with being successful than with being faithful. Your main comfort is that in your labor you are not alone, for God, the eternal One, who guides the marches of the stars, is with you.—*Spurgeon.*

"Outsells all other blood purifiers. I hear customers say it cures when other medicines have failed," says I. F. Belfry, druggist, Shelbourne, of Burdock Blood Bitters.

— There is nothing—no, nothing—innocent or good, that dies and is forgotten; let us hold to that faith or none. An infant, a prattling child, dying in the cradle will live again in the better thoughts of those that loved it, and play its part through them in redeeming actions of the world, though its body be burnt to ashes, or drowned in the deep sea.—*Dickens.*

Special Providence.

Infidels contend that the universe is governed by fixed laws which cannot be changed nor suspended. Hence, a miracle or a special Providence is an impossibility. This is to give man more foresight and power than the Maker of the universe. Man has sought out and made many powerful instruments of rapid motion which are governed by fixed laws, such as railroads, steamships, telegraphs, etc. Yet, in every instance, the human maker had the foresight and power to put brakes on his machinery so that he can stop it at will. He can even stop the lightning current in its rapid course. What an absurdity then to say that the Maker of the universe cannot put the brakes on His machinery.

In Joshua 10: 11 it is stated that during the battle of Joshua with the Amorites, "the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them and they died."

The infidel argues that science has discovered that showers of meteors and aerolites or stones are periodic in their earthly visits, and this was no miracle, but a regular shower of aerolites. Suppose, for argument, it was a regular shower of aerolites, the special Providence is all the more apparent. It certainly was a special Providence that Joshua was told to contend with the Amorites just at the time of this periodic shower, of which time none but God knew. Again it was another special Providence that the aerolites all fell on the Amorites and killed them, and not one fell on the Israelites who were pursuing them closely. This shows that God, when He chooses, can so arrange that His regular laws shall work His special Providence.—*R. v. A. B. Cabaniss, in Western Recorder.*

A LESSON FOR CHURCHES AND CHURCH CHOIRS.—*Harper's Weekly* for Feb. 1 has a supplement devoted to choral societies and conductors. In its illustrations it has a picture of "The Pastor's Choir" of Gethsemane Baptist Church, Philadelphia, concerning which it says:—"The musical life of Philadelphia contains one feature which is very suggestive of food for reflection. This is the choir of children in the Gethsemane Baptist church. This unique organization furnishes a solution of the question which confronts choirmasters in some communities: 'How shall the choir be recruited?' It was organized fifteen or twenty years ago under the pastorate of the Rev. L. P. Hornberger, now dead, at whose request it was called 'The Pastor's Choir.' As many as two hundred children are taught the rudiments of singing and music in this choir by Mr. Henry J. Keely, and from it not only the choir proper of the church, but many other musical organizations have been recruited. It occupies a gallery of its own in the church during service, and contributes greatly to its artistic beauty and devotional impressiveness. It is a profound pity that the sound principle underlying this organization has not more general recognition in the churches." Here is a suggestion of high value. In many of our congregations the worship music is deplorable. A trained choir from the Sunday school would soon remedy the evil. It would interest the young people in the service, and might be found serviceable in many ways. We believe the young people at Gethsemane Church are trained to sing antiphonally—an ancient method, and one which really contributes to thoughtfulness and beauty in the service.—*Freeman.*

— It is announced in London that a discovery which may prove to be of immense importance, has recently been made by Bryennois, the learned archbishop of Nicomedia, who is already famous for the discovery of the completion of the Epistle of Clement of Rome, and the Teaching of the Apostles. The report is that in some Turkish library at Damascus he has found a manuscript of the New Testament dating from about the middle of the fourth century—i. e., of the same antiquity as the Codex Sinaiticus. If this is true, and if the manuscript is not indeed a duplicate of the Sinaitic manuscript, which it is said to resemble closely, this discovery is equal in importance to that which gave Codex Aleph to the world. It is said that the new manuscript resembles the Sinaitic in certain peculiarities of text, as well as in containing the same books which are appended to the latter, namely, the Epistle of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas. Whether or not, unlike the Sinaitic, it includes all of the Shepherd, is an interesting question not yet answered. Whether the new manuscript is only a contemporary duplicate or an independent witness, the civilized world will await fuller particulars with extreme interest.

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— Everyone must have felt that a cheerful friend is like a sunny day, which sheds its brightness on all around; and most of us can, as we choose, make of this world either a palace or a prison.—*Sir John Lubbock.*

Mr. John Anderson, Grassmere, Ont., writes: "The Vegetable Discovery you sent me is all gone, and I am glad to say that it has greatly benefited those who have used it. One man in particular says it has made him a new man, and he cannot say too much for its cleansing and curative qualities."

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