

tion, its wants, its pleasures and its instincts. Such is the decree of that Providence who assigns to all animated beings their habitation, and adapts *it* to *them*, and *them* to *it*. Adaptation is the governing law of his procedure. In the moral world it is his purpose that the same law ultimately prevail. It obtains already in the most extensive provinces of His dominion:—in Heaven, which is a completely *holy* place, and tenanted by beings of an untaintedly holy character; and in hell, the dread prison house of universe, and the exclusive abode of incorrigible and irreclaimable wickedness. On earth too this was once the law: man was a holy being, and the world, a paradise worthy of such a tenant. But sin having entered, disorder entered along with it;—and now we see the good and the bad, the righteous and the wicked, mixed together like wheat and tares in the same field, the wolf and the lamb in the same fold. But this confusion is not destined to continue. And man, though he fell, having been placed under a dispensation of mercy, in order that they who sought it might regain the honours of their primitive state, and they who loved their degradation, might be confirmed in it, earth is now merely a preparatory state, the introduction to another, a *theatre*, for the manifestation and ripening of character with a view to the final destination; the place where the future seraph or the future demon is born and educated for his permanent lot. It is the character *here* that determines the condition *hereafter*.

Does sin then form the pervading element of this character? In that case hell, where sin is matured, is the future abode, and every sin that is unrepented of and indulged in, whether exhibited in purpose, act, or habit, is so far hell begun in the soul, a strengthening of the

bonds of union which ally the sinner with the impure spirits who inhabit its dark and desolate provinces. What is the character of these unhappy spirits? Just that character of which every unrenewed man exhibits the first outlines in the present preparatory state, one of revolt from God, to which they owe their downfall; and of a malignant hate to the whole of his holy offspring. Witness the wiles and machinations by which their combined hosts, with Satan the arch-apostate at their head, first shook man's allegiance to his Maker, and still labour in filling their ranks with recruits from this world. The character of these unhappy spirits, is one which exhibits the complete annihilation of the dominion of reason, conscience, every sentiment of piety, and every feeling of kindly affection; with the unopposed mastery of every unholy malignant passion, mutual recrimination and hate, self-torturing remorse, despair. This, my Brethren, is hell, the hell which the devils endure. It is the awful combination of so many elements of pain, discord, misery; the poison of so many bitter and deleterious infusions, operating on each and all without any counteracting antidote, that, if not solely, yet mainly, supplies the vials of that wrath which the hand of Divine justice pours out on their heads, and supplies fuel to the fire which shall never be quenched, and food for the worm that never dies. And who will say that it is insufficient? Just take the world in which we live, banish, in supposition, from it for a season all the pious, the benevolent, the pure; release it from all the restraints which divine and human laws impose upon it; let Atheism, Extortion, Lust, Avarice, Revenge, stalk forth in unbridled dominion, occupying every house of a widespread and numerous population—and let these in the