

outlawed, a disgraced and ruined man, living on for years with the mark of his sin branded on his forehead. Another, not a whit less guilty, escapes detection for years, yea perhaps during life is held up as a model of uprightness, and not until death are his frauds discovered, and then the punishment which society inflicts cannot reach him. And if you feel disposed to go deeper down into human experience than physical suffering for physical sin, or than the anguish which society inflicts for wicked injuries done to her,—if you press the consideration of the stings of conscience, the lashings of remorse, that “wounded spirit” which “who can bear?” here again the difficulty meets you that the worst people feel the least; the most outrageous sinner who has come to call evil good and good evil, presents the hide of a rhinoceros to the darts of conscience, or rather knows little or nothing of its stings.

I shall have occasion to refer again to this state of extreme wickedness and terrible hardness of heart into which so many have gradually brought themselves, but just now let another objection be taken against “Christian’s” representation of this law of punishment; I mean that it precludes forgiveness. I know it is said that God loves and pardons the sinner, but forever punishes his sin. But this, let me say, without intending any offence, is a mere play upon words, without honest and fair meaning. If God really forgives the sinner, He then and there forgives his sin. If a king pardons a rebel, he remits all punishment for his rebellion. If a father forgives a prodigal son, there is in his mind no reserve of punishment for what he has done. I suppose “Christian” would say, “aye, but this law of punishment is still in force which the king’s or father’s forgiveness does not touch.” I simply deny that any such law can exist in the case; a law, I mean which inflicts punishment. That is a retributive thing, and you cannot make it terminate on an act or on a state, apart from a conscious and responsible individual—I mean that you cannot punish sin except in a sinner or in sinners; punishment is a word without meaning if it has not relation to something greater than mere action or condition, you must have the living being. Hence the truly philosophical, as well as beneficent aspect of the Scripture doctrine of a substitutionary atonement for sin. God, the offended one, in the person of Christ Himself endures the penalty of the violated law, and having vindicated that eternal law of righteousness forgives and saves even penitent believing sinners. There seems to be no room in “Christian’s” theory for this vital fact in the Christian system.

“Christian” acknowledges that there are so many passages in Scripture, and such representation in the teaching of our Lord and the Apostles, which seem to establish the teaching of the churches that the punishment of the wicked shall be endless, as to render difficult any other conclusion from them. And yet he quotes other Scripture statements that seem to him to teach the final salvation of all men. Accordingly his thought is that Scripture will not be found to settle the question. My fear is that if Scripture does not settle it, nothing can do so. I see not where else we can go for true light upon it. But let that pass. We have rather to examine the utterances of Scripture which are supposed to teach the final restoration of all men. I do not so understand them, and now to the proof:—“Paul says that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”—by which quotation “Christian” intends to show that death is the last to be destroyed, whereas Paul here calls death the last enemy and declares that by the general resurrection he or it shall be destroyed. Again, “He speaks of a time when God shall be ‘all in all,’ making no distinction between the blessed and the condemned.” Paul, however, does not here refer to this point at all, but declares that when the Son shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father, He, as the Son, shall close the mediatorial work that the Godhead may be “all in all,” i.e., without distinction of offices as they now exist in the mediatorial economy. Much is made of another text, “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive,” a passage often quoted with the mistake now made. It will be found, on a careful perusal, that the subject under discussion by Paul, who is an exact reasoner, is not men in general, but servants of Christ, believers, they who when they die “fall asleep in Christ,” and he says that “as in the one Adam they all die, so in the other Adam, the Christ, shall they all be made alive.” Thus there is no reference here to men in general. It may be true that in the first Adam all men without exception die, but that is not the truth taught here, the Apostle is writing of one class of men. Again, our Lord’s words are cited in support of universal restoration:—“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Me;” words, which whether they refer to His crucifixion or to His being lifted up in the preaching of the cross or both, have exclusive relation to the present state of existence, and simply declare that immense numbers of all classes, all men without distinction, will be drawn to Him, an assurance which has been in fulfilment for more than eighteen centuries, and never more so than at this present.

Without further dealing with specific texts, I have to take grave exception to “Christian’s” genesis of the doctrine of endless punishment. He says that its inception is found in the Jews’ misconception of God in His relation to man. Patriarchy represents Him as a beneficent Being, but after the Exodus came different views of Him as a terrible God. This was needful among a people corrupted by the slavery of Egypt. So, according to “Christian,” we Christians have the same notion; we think of God as a King or a stern Judge, &c. Jewish thought and Christian thought on this subject is “paganism in a religious dress.” Christ’s teaching is contrasted with this estimate of God as making prominent His Fatherhood. But in another connection our Lord’s teaching is described as affected by Jewish and Rabbinical notions existing in His day, and which He employed in parable and other form of instruction. I refer to the papers for the full statement.

Without denying to these representations some slight foundation in fact, or refusing to give the facts due consideration in our exegesis of passages of Scripture, yet as a whole, they present the case, in our judgment, in a manner wide of the truth. The ever blessed God is described in the Book of Genesis, as He is elsewhere, in the aspect of terrible majesty and of justice and holiness, as well as in that of beneficence and compassion. Long before the Exodus, we see the curse upon Cain, “the flood upon the world of the ungodly.” The confusion of Babel, the destruction by fire of the cities of the plain, doubtless a mere epitome of judgments inflicted upon sinners by Almighty God. At the time of the Exodus and during the national existence of the Jews there were exhibited innumerable proofs of a Father’s tender mercy and forbearance, as well as of

the retributive inflictions of a righteous Judge and Ruler. Our Lord by no means confined His representations of the Father to the parental aspect of His character, but spake of Him as “to be feared who was able to destroy both body and soul in hell.” Besides, a large portion of Old Testament descriptions of the Most High have been given by men who spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. They are clothed with an authority which it were impious in us to question. We have to take them as the very voice of God. So far as they go they must settle for us the matters to which they relate.

Further, as to our Lord’s teaching, a solemn and emphatic disclaimer must be entered against the theory that it was in any wise substantially affected by Jewish false notions. I mean that, when He spoke of Satan, He did not simply bring in for purposes of illustration or impression Persian or other dualism which we know to be false, but that He meant the great adversary, the devil, a living personality; that when He spoke of hades or gehenna, He meant to tell us of an actual unseen world of the departed on the one hand, and an actual hell on the other, of which that valley of corruption near Jerusalem was a type, and furnished for it a name. We must be profoundly and reverently careful in our treatment of the words of Jesus. Let our theories be scattered to the winds, if they must be, but His word stands forever.

I would also remonstrate against the tone in which our writer occasionally utters his estimate of what God may be expected to do or not to do. On the subject of the punishment of sin there is in the present day too much irreverent assumption that we know what would be and what would not be compatible with the infinite purity, beneficence, and glory of the Divine Majesty. A little modest and awe-inspiring Calvinism would be an excellent medicine for those of whom we complain. Have they considered that the permission of evil in the Universe and in our world, with all the enormous results of dire suffering and horrible calamities, is in fact compatible with a Fatherhood of infinite tenderness and compassion? We cannot understand this, but there is the actual fact. How dare we, then, declare dogmatically that God must intend to wipe this evil out of the universe—must, because his perfections require it. Who of us is sufficient without presumption so to affirm? “Christian,” with much ability and partial correctness, presents punishment as one of two kinds, one of which he regards as remedial, suggesting thereby universal restoration. I quite agree with most that he says on the negative form of punishment, consisting of loss which can never be remedied. This is a penal consequence of neglect of duty, and yet one that I fear does not much affect the sinner’s enjoyment. We very truly say that he does not know what he loses. And if he does not know, his suffering, at least conscious suffering, cannot be great. There is, however, so much that is true and beautiful and withal of vast practical value in the description, that I am unwilling to criticise what may be doubtful. But when our writer comes to punishment and its certain effects, we have to join issue on the facts stated. It is quite true, as we have already declared, that pain supposes life—suffering must be of a living being; but when it is said to be always remedial, we demur. It is true that if it awakens the prodigal to consider, it has been an instrument of good. It is true that if it leads men to inquire what physical law they have violated, it proves the harbinger of repentance. But in neither case is the suffering or pain itself remedial, it is merely the instrument which awakens the faculties, it is left to other agency to bring out the remedy. On the precise subject before us the neglect of an important distinction produces confusion of thought, namely, the effect of pain and suffering on a regenerate and an unregenerate mind and heart. On the last named it is for the most part hardening and rendering worse. We read of those who “gnaw their tongues for pain and blaspheme the God of heaven.” Pain and suffering consciously deserved infuriates and makes wickedly mad the transgressor. He gnashes his teeth with rage and hate on even the kind and compassionate One who awards him a most deserved and necessary punishment. I do not believe that the fires of just retribution ever in themselves called forth a penitent thought or the sigh of contrition; there is nothing remedial in those fires.

The Holy Spirit uses pain and suffering as a loving discipline for the purification of the renewed soul. It is with this reference that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says: “Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.” True, loving Christians are called upon to rejoice in tribulation because it worketh patience and experience and a hope that maketh not ashamed, for the love of God is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given unto us.” It will not do to infer from a multitude of statements as to the good effect of suffering and pain as a discipline to which true Christians are subjected, that the same effect will be produced on men generally who are being without God and without hope in the world. We must maintain, as proved by the general experience of mankind, that painful suffering and punishment are not in themselves remedial. The fires of purgatory never made a soul better, and hence the idea of a purgatory is a delusion.

If asked, in conclusion, what theory I would propose in lieu of that which “Christian” sets forth, I answer that I abide by the old, that of the fathers and of the ages, until something better can be proposed. In saying so, I am not to be understood as sanctioning horrible descriptions, dreary inferences from hard dogmas, or any other thing unworthy of God and of Christ; nor am I to be supposed to profess any clear apprehension of the nature of the dark future of the ungodly, the Judge of all the earth will do right, but we cannot improve the statement:—“these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

HENRY WILKES, D.D., LL.D.

BOOKS.—I have friends whose society is exceedingly agreeable to me; they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours on account of their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them. They are always at my service, and I admit them to my company and dismiss them from it whenever I please. They are never troublesome, and immediately answer every question I ask of them. Some relate to me the events of past ages, and others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live and how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits, while others give fortitude to my mind, and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and on their information I safely rely in all emergencies. In return for all these services they only ask me to accommodate them with a convenient chamber in some corner of my humble habitation, where they may repose in peace; for these friends are more secure in the tranquillity of retirement than in the tumults of society.—*Petrarch.*