

of facts which we can test, I affirm that it is not safe to take it and apply it to this course of facts which lie beyond the touch of the human spiritual finger-tips. We can reduce this sentiment to absurdity, by applying it to the time before the world was ; and, therefore, I fear it will turn out an absurdity if we apply it to the time after the world shall cease to exist.

Yes ; but ultimately more good will come if evil is permitted. What ! I thought you did not believe that evil is a necessary means of the greatest good ! I assumed that you adhered to Theodore Parker's position that conscience pronounces that evil ought not to be. If evil is the necessary means of the greatest good, then it ought to be.

In any case you will obtain only a painless universe ; so we come back precisely to the point where we stood before public criticism was cast on our lines of thought—and that was that your marble staircase takes men up no higher than your red-hot iron ; and your red-hot iron no higher than they can ascend on your marble. And so, if the only object of evil in the universe is to take men up, God is not benevolent, for he could take men up painlessly to the same height, and he does not do so. There is where you come out at last. It is the stern scientific truth on this theme that you have no ground in this sentiment for denying that character tends to a final permanence.

Fill the ages with the certainty that all character tends to a free final permanence, which can come but once, and you encourage all virtue and repress all vice—as the nature of things does. That belief works well, and so deserves coronation. It puts beneath every man who is loyal to duty the everlasting arms. It makes him glad, with the unbounded confidence that all things work together for good to those who love God ; and serious in an equally measureless confidence that all things do not work together for good to those who do not.

Theodore Parker once proclaimed, in a stray passage, that violation of moral law may be so bold and persistent as to bring with it penalties that have no remedy.

He wrote explicitly ; "From my own experience I know the remorse which comes from conscious violation of my own integrity, from treason to myself and my God. It transcends all bodily pain, all grief at disappointed schemes, all anguish which comes from sickness, age, from death of dear ones prematurely taken away. To these afflictions I can bow with a 'Thy will, not mine, be done.' But remorse, the pain of sin—that is my work. This comes, obviously, to warn us of the ruin which lies before us ; for, as the violation of the natural material conditions of bodily life leads to dissolution of the body, so the wilful, constant violation of the natural conditions of spiritual well-being leads to the destruction thereof."—("Sermons on Theism," p. 404.)

This is clear and straightforward ; but it is immediately explained and repudiated by its own author.

If lost souls repent, they in that act cease to be lost. Will Iago repent ? Will Mephistopheles repent ? Will Milton's Satan repent ? What is the definition of perdition ? Permanent dissimilarity of feeling with God. That definition does not imply that a man has lost all tendency to respect what is reasonable ; but that he never attains predominant love of what God loves. The failure to attain predominant love of what God loves and hate of what God hates, is perdition. In the name of the law by which all character tends to final permanence, all science proclaims that Iago and Mephistopheles may fall into permanence of dissimilarity of feeling with God. Salvation in that condition is a natural impossibility, for salvation includes similarity of feeling with God.

Gentlemen, we want truth winnowed by being held up in the breezes that blow out of all quarters of the sky. I take this proposition that it is safe to die as an Iscariot, and I hold it up in the winds that blow out of the centuries of Roman degradation. It suffers a winnowing even then, for the winds whisper to me : "This teaching would not have cleansed Rome." I hold up the proposition in the winds that blow out of American greed and fraud. The answer is yet more decisive. Safe to die an Iscariot ? Safe to die a kidnapper ? Safe to die a Cain,