

## DESTRUCTION OF SOUL AND BODY IN HELL.

In Matt. x. 28, and Luke xii. 4, 5, we find our Saviour speaking of fearing Him who is able to do more than man can do, as man can only *destroy the body*, but God can *destroy the soul*. These passages which are different records of one teaching, are supposed to stand in direct opposition to the Universalist's interpretation of the Bible, presenting an insurmountable barrier to the reception of our faith. The reader is invited to examine a sincere and candid exposition of these passages, which shall now be offered for his attention.

First, let us quote the passages:—'And fear them not which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' Matt. x. 28. 'And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do, but I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.' Luke xii. 4, 5.

To whom, under what circumstances, and for what purpose, were these ideas expressed by the Saviour?

1. They were addressed to his *disciples* whom he called his 'friends.' This deserves a special attention. 2. The circumstances under which they were spoken were of a peculiar character, as it was necessary to place before the minds of the disciples the most powerful considerations to strengthen their minds and to impart true heroism. He had honestly spoken to them of their exposure to trial and persecution by professing his name, how they would be arraigned before governors and judges, and bids them not to fear such foes. After repeating the caution, he bids them to proclaim his doctrine boldly, as he who bears a message from a king and publishes it upon the house top to all the people. And then comes the text, followed by a beautiful reference to the minute care of Divine Providence. 3. We now learn the *purpose* for which the ideas under examination were expressed. They were expressed in order to direct attention to the Omnipotence of God, that the disciples might never be appalled by the array of the force of the enemy. The *ability* or *power* of men, is brought into contrast with the *ability* or *power* of God. Let this reference to the Omnipotence of God, his ability to 'kill the soul,' might be taken for more than was intended, Jesus immediately proceeds to tender similitude respecting the Providence of God,—'Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore; ye are of more value than many sparrows.' So also in the record by Luke x. 6, 7. The *ability* of God to destroy the soul is alone referred to. No assertion is made, or intimation given, that he will ever exercise that power; and the allusion to the possession of such ability, seems to have been made as the highest possible expression of the Almightyness of the Deity,—the same as in the instance when John the Baptist said to the Pharisees and Sadducees.—'And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God

is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.' Matthew iii. 9. Luke iii. 8.

In carefully criticising these passages, we have to enquire, 1. *What is to be understood by killing the body?* as it must be evident that the second member of the comparison can mean no more nor less, in its import, in reference to the *soul*, than we infer from the first in reference to the *body*. To kill the body, is to deprive it of life, so that it can no longer be ranked with existences. This was all the prosecutors could do. They had no power to reach home to the soul. The spiritual being was not within the compass of their tyranny and many a martyr counted it all joy to bear the sufferings connected with the killing of the body.

2. *What is to be understood by killing or destroying the soul?* Certainly there is but one answer, and that is, To kill the soul is to deprive it of existence. No other meaning can comport with the Saviour's comparison, and those who make this expression to signify perpetual existence a hopeless misery, are in the highest degree *unwarrantably presumptuous*. To destroy 'soul and body,' is used in the Scriptures in the sense of complete destruction, synonymous with 'root and branch.' Isa. x. 18. 'And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body.' But the common use made of the passages under consideration, is to support the doctrine of endless misery: and for this purpose they are exultingly quoted as sufficient to put an end to all controversy with the Universalist. But this is in vain, as the Saviour spoke only of God's *ability* to destroy, as John the Baptist did of his *ability* to create, neither asserting that he would do the one or the other. And even if the remark be pushed to the extreme, that it referred to what *may be*, it can at the farthest signify the destruction of the soul as death destroys the body.

Still, there is one other point which may be deemed important in the settlement of the question, and that is, what is said of the destruction of the soul *in hell*. In answer to this supposed difficulty, let us notice,—

1. The expression is 'destroy both soul and body in hell,' and what idea of the destruction of the *body* can be connected with the *common notion of hell?*

2. The word rendered *hell* is *Gehenna*, and the universal concession of critics is that it primarily referred to a most abhorrent place where the offal from Jerusalem was deposited and fires applied to consume it; and as the offal would breed worms, hence the expression, 'Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' Josh. vi. 8. 1. Kings xxiii. 10. Isa. lxxv. 24. Jer. vi. 31, 32. From the *literal* import, the meaning of *Gehenna* was changed to signify *metaphorically*, any severe punishment, specially involving shame and disgrace. The following concise statements deserve to be remembered, in reference to the meaning of *Gehenna*. 1. The Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, usually called the Septuagint, which was completed 150 years before Christ, preserves uniformly the literal signification of the word, viz. the valley of Hinnom. At that period, therefore, the word had certainly not come to designate a place of future tor-

ment. 2. In none of the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament, is the word *Gehenna* ever employed; yet two of them, the wisdom of Solomon and the Second of Maccabees, speak distinctly of future retribution, and they were confessedly written a short time previous to the Christian era. If *Gehenna* had then become the appropriate name for a place of future punishment, how happens it that these writers do not employ it? 3. Philo Judaeus, a learned Jew, cotemporary with the Saviour, wrote several works, in which he describes at length the supposed sufferings of the wicked after death, yet he never uses the word *Gehenna*. 4. Josephus, whose works were written in the first century of the Christian era, gives very full accounts of the opinions of the Jews concerning the future punishment of the wicked, but never intimates that they expressed it by the word *Gehenna*.

Yet it is boldly asserted that the literal meaning of this word, *Gehenna*, rendered *hell*, was lost previous to the time of our Saviour. This opinion is contradictory of the plain fact, that the *first* time this word is employed by our Saviour, it can have no other than a *literal* reference! Matt. v. 22. In that passage our Saviour speaks of three kinds of punishments which were awarded to criminals by judicial tribunals among the Jews—the judgment, or inferior court; the council, or the great Sanhedrim; and the power that could expose to be burned alive in the *Gehenna* of fire. All critics of eminence and authority give this meaning to the text. Dr. T. W. Coit, in his edition of Townsend's Bible, makes the exposure to the *Gehenna* of fire to mean, condemnation to the loathsome office of tending the fires in that horrid place of burning offal.—Part 3, p. 90. Here we see plain evidence that this word had *not* lost its original significance, and the assertion that it referred in our Saviour's time, only to punishment in the future state, is perfectly gratuitous. And by our Saviour's reference to adultery, it appears evident that in his use of the word in verses 29 and 30 of the same chapter, he must have alluded to the progress of those sins, which at last make the sinner as a miserable loathsome corpse cast into the *Gehenna* fire to be consumed.

The Jews abhorred that valley of loathsomeness. Religion had associated with it ideas of horror because of the idolatrous rites there observed when it was a beautiful place, ere it was defiled by Josiah, and made a spot for the reception of a large city's offal: the thought of being thrown there even after death, was repulsive beyond expression to a Jew. Our Saviour's warning was, therefore, that his disciples fortify themselves by all considerations, especially by thoughts of the Almightyness of God, who could bring calamity that would not only involve the body in death, but end the existence of the soul. And did he not picture the great calamity to come upon the Jewish people as a *Gehenna* fire,—as John spake of it as 'the wrath to come'?

We are sometimes told, that if there was no danger of the soul being destroyed, Jesus would not have used such language as he did. To such objections we simply reply, that when John spake of God's being able out of stones to raise up children to Abraham, no one dreams that he contem-

plated God as ever intending actually to do any such thing. He used, as Jesus did, a strong metaphor, to speak of God's ability to affect his own purposes. *Only* to the ability or power of God, did the Saviour make reference; and that this almighty power was not really to be used to destroy the soul, is evident from what immediately succeeds, setting forth God's tender care in his gracious Providence. 'Fear not,' is his final lesson. Not one sparrow is forgotten before God; (Luke xii. 6.) and to bring the minuteness of our Father's providence more minute still, the numbering of all the hairs of the head is referred to. A falling sparrow was minute, but a falling hair vastly more so. How beautifully is the awful idea of God's almighty power where-by we see him possessed of ability to destroy the soul, changed to amiability as we hear the Saviour's assurance to his disciples that his infinite power would be exercised in their behalf!

What God is to us, we need to learn more, that we may fear man less—have more of devotion to the highest interest of our being, and render unto him the homage of heroic faithfulness to all the duties of our Christian vocation. H. B.

## GOD DOES NOT LAUGH AT CALAMITY.

The twenty-sixth verse of the first chapter of Proverbs is frequently referred to for proof that the great God—the maker of heaven and earth, actually laughs at the endless calamity of his poor, defenceless creatures. Horrible as the idea is, it is a part of the orthodox theology, and may be found in religious books and tracts—while it seeks justification from the words recorded by the wise men, 'I will also laugh at at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh.'

Whether or not this be the language of God addressed to mortals, we shall not stop just here to consider, but will simply ask, 'What have we ever seen in his word, works or providence, that indicates a disposition so black with cruelty, as that involved in the common view of the passage? He created us for happiness; and hath surrounded us with all the blessings essential to a very high state of enjoyment; our formation is such that the natural action of both body and mind is attended with pleasure. In all this we certainly perceive a spirit opposite to the one above noticed.

But after man had sinned, his heavenly Father did not leave him to utterly perish—nor did he regard him with less interest than before. He sent his own, well beloved Son, to save the entire world; and gave him all power in heaven and on the earth to accomplish that object. Jesus came to man as a transcript of his Father—as the express image of his person, and the brightness of his glory. He was a God in the flesh, inasmuch as he exhibited his disposition, plans and purpose. But on what occasion did he represent the malignant disposition ascribed to God by those who tell us he is laughing at the endless misery of millions upon millions of our race? To what part of his history shall we go for a single hint that the misfortunes of sinners gave him pleasure? Shall we find it the account of his weeping over the idolized capital of Judea, when he cried 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest