

life, and the agonies of a conversion in a hardened old age. He who had been "born when he was old," thinks himself the greatest debtor to redeeming love, because a long-suffering God spared him during a rebellion of nearly fourscore years, and made him a new creature at the last, blotting out the cloud of sins that had accumulated in a life-time of ungodliness.

Let us leave the two to prosecute their happy strife, and turn our attention to some important aspects of the doctrine that it shall be with us in eternity not as we begin, but as we conclude this present life. Questions of great interest spring up and present themselves for solution, regarding its intrinsic reasonableness and its moral tendency. Does the doctrine accord with reason and Revelation? and will it undermine or establish practical righteousness in the conduct of those who receive it?

As to its intrinsic truth, in addition to the clear intimations of Scripture, it may suffice to suggest an analogy in nature. A projectile thrown into space maintains to the end of its course the direction in which it was moving at the moment when it escaped from the propelling force. Whether the propulsion may have been effected by the human hand or gunpowder, or any other species of force; whether the earlier portion of its course, while it was receiving the impulse and kept under control, may have been a zig-zag, or a straight line, or the segment of a circle, the body thrown out, except in as far as it is still affected by resisting media, maintains the course communicated to it to the last moment of the impulse. The stone thrown from a sling moves in a straight line from the point of its escape, with no reference to the circular movement by which the impulse was communicated, precisely in the same way as it would have done had the impetus been given in a straight line like the flight of an arrow from a bow. There is a sublime unity of conception in the works and government of God. The moral and material approach near each other and run parallel; but, with our present powers and instruments, only a few of these relations are discoverable, and even these few are but dimly seen. As the tree falls, so it lies. The attitude and condition of a soul, when it is projected into eternity, remain as they were when that soul let go its hold of time. This is the doctrine of Scripture; and the analogy of nature, as far as we can observe it, accords.

But it is possible that some who confess its truth may fear its tendency. Does it not encourage the wicked to delay their reformation till their dying day? No. It has in its own nature no such tendency: the imputation is absolutely groundless. It is true that a corrupt heart and a confused understanding, working in concert, misrepresent the doctrine and pervert it to practical ungodliness. But if everything that the wicked abuse were removed from the Scriptures, the gospel itself would be shorn of all its glory. Even the unspeakable gift of God, the foundation on which the hope of the saints is built, becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to the impenitent who blindly dash themselves against it. Neither Christ, nor any portion of his truth has been held back, lest impious men should pervert

the blessing to their own destruction. The encouragement which tender, broken hearts require is freely supplied in the Scripture, although he who gives it knows that some will turn it to bad account.

The indispensable necessity of the doctrine may be conveniently demonstrated by showing what mischievous consequences would ensue if it were withdrawn. If the short and simple statement that those who die in the Lord are blessed were kept back, and something that might be considered safer introduced in its stead, it may be demonstrated that every possible substitute would utterly subvert the gospel. If to be in the Lord at death were not deemed sufficient, a converted life of longer duration must be required. How long? A certain proportion of the whole life, or a specified number of years? The specification of any period, whether absolute or proportional, would obviously be contrary to the whole analogy of faith; and, even if it were not, the introduction of it would limit the mercy of God, and crush the hope of man. Under this system, the most enlightened would always be the most hopeless.

#### THE GREAT MYSTERY.

The body is to die; so much is certain. What lies beyond? No one who passes the charmed boundary comes back to tell. The imagination visits the realm of shadows—sent out from the window in the soul over life's restless waters,—but wings its way wearily back, with no olive leaf in its beak as a token of emerging life beyond the closely bending horizon. The great sun comes and goes in the heaven, yet breathes no secret of the ethereal wilderness; the crescent moon cleaves her nightly passage across the upper deep but tosses overboard no message, and displays no signals. The sentinel stars challenge each other as they walk their nightly rounds, but we catch no syllable of their countersign which gives passage to the heavenly camp. Between this and the other life is a great gulf fixed, across which neither eye nor foot can travel. The gentle friend, whose eyes we closed in their last sleep long years ago, died with rapture in her wonder-stricken eyes, a smile of ineffable joy upon her lips, and hands folded over a triumphant heart, but her lips were past speech, and intimated nothing of the vision that enthralled her.

#### CHRISTIAN LABOR.

You are forgiven and accepted. You owe all to Christ. You look forth from your position of safety, and behold a world lying in wickedness. You pity the sinful, as the Lord pitied you. Having been saved, you desire, as if by an instinct, to be a saviour. You begin. You grasp a falling brother by the best band, a brother's love, and draw him to yourself that you may draw him to the Saviour. For a time you seem to have gained your brother. But after a while, at some unguarded moment, and through some unguarded opening, seven devils enter and dwell again in the partially reformed heart, and the last state of that man seems worse than the first. You are weary; but you must labor on.