

almost have dissolved humanity with terror. Nor is there, in reality, any such line of demarcation between the good and the wicked as that drawn in the homiletic language of the Gospel between the wheat and the tares, between the sheep and the goats, between those who enter by the wide and by the narrow gate. Between the extreme points of goodness and wickedness there are gradations of character in number infinite and fluctuating from hour to hour. The Roman Catholic Church tries to meet this difficulty by the invention of Purgatory, which, it is needless to say, is a creation of her own. In this case also the difficulty is enhanced when we take in children and those on whom circumstances have borne so hardly as almost to preclude volition. Nor are the passages in the Gospel concerning the future state, if pressed literally, altogether consistent with each other, at least with regard to the mode of transition. The idea generally presented is that of a final judgment, in which the good are to be separated from the wicked, the good entering into eternal joy, the wicked into eternal fire, and of a period of sleep or unconsciousness which is to last till the Judgment Day. But this is not consistent with the parable of Dives and Lazarus, with the preaching of Christ to the souls in prison, or with the words of Christ on the cross to the penitent thief. These variations become more important when we consider the unspeakably vital character of the doctrine. Resurrection of the body is an article of the creed. It presents insuperable difficulties: not only are the particles of the body dispersed, but they must often be incorporated into other bodies. Besides, is a babe to rise again a babe, and is an old man to rise with the body of old age? Devices for meeting such difficulties may be found; but they are devices, and not solutions.

It is on the Christian revelation that our hope has hitherto rested. Butler, when he applies reason to the question of a future life, has revelation all the time in reserve. He professes not to offer independent proof of the doctrine, but merely to disarm Reason of the objection which she might urge against Revelation. Of independent proof, with deference be it said, he offers not so much as, with our present scientific lights at all events, will amount even to a serious presumption. Assuming, after the fashion of his day, that the soul is a being apart from the body, he suggests that it may be a simple monad, indecipherable and therefore indestructible, or at least not presumably liable to dissolution when the body is dissolved. But we know that his presumption is unfounded, and that what he calls the soul is but the higher and finer activity of our general frame. He says that the faculties and emotions sometimes

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