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# EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

A LETTER

*By A. Gordon Chapman*

TO

THOMAS SCOTT.



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On religion, in particular, the time appears to me to have come, when it is the duty of all who, being qualified in point of knowledge, have on mature consideration satisfied themselves that the current opinions are not only false, but hurtful, to make their dissent known : at least, if they are among those whose station or reputation gives their opinion a chance of being attended to. Such an avowal would put an end, at once and for ever, to the vulgar prejudice, that what is called, very improperly, unbelief, is connected with any bad qualities either of mind or heart. The world would be astonished if it knew how great a proportion of its brightest ornaments—of those most distinguished even in popular estimation for wisdom and virtue—are complete sceptics in religion ; many of them refraining from avowal, less from personal considerations, than from a conscientious, though now, in my opinion, a most mistaken apprehension, lest by speaking out what would tend to weaken existing beliefs, and by consequence (as they suppose) existing restraints, they should do harm instead of good.

*Autobiography* by JOHN STUART MILL.

## EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT.

DEAR FRIEND,—

WOULD that the topic were more genial or humane, to say nothing of divine, for, assuredly, the odour of such a sulphurous thesis is the reverse of that of "sanctity." Yet I will decline no subject on which you think that what I may have to say can possibly serve the cause we both have at heart,—for I am persuaded that the cause pleaded by yourself and your distinguished coadjutors is mainly the same as that to which my poor thoughts and aspirations have been long directed. Many of us, I have no doubt, see several of the questions at issue from various points of view and through different media, with glasses not adjusted to the same focus; but we are all of the Human-Catholic Church, seeking to realise a religion reasonable no less than aspirational, satisfying, that is, the sentimental or emotional requirements of the spirit, no less than the logical and intellectual demands of the understanding. Ignoring neither, our endeavour is to conciliate and unite the two, in common allegiance and devotion to the one Power from which they both spring. Our Faith is faith in "Principles," and *that* I believe is true Christian Faith, as contradistinguished from shallow assent and consent to opinions and conjectures of a quasi-historical or traditional sort, often assuming the name of a sacred grace to which it is in no degree entitled. "Faith" is an inward confiding temper of the soul Godward, and has nothing reli-

giously in common with acceptance or rejection of lo, here! or lo, there! assertions of circumstantial import, which have to be judged solely by laws of evidence or antecedent probability—whether too credulously received or too incredulously denied, affecting only the intelligence, and by no means the spiritual depth or breadth of our being. Surely those who put their trust, through calm and storm, in the abiding principles of Faith, Hope, and Love are true members of the one indivisible and universal Church of which Christ is the Spiritual High Priest. He came to proclaim peace and goodwill among men—a gospel only to be realised by unity of principle, but never attainable by any attempt at an impossible and undesirable uniformity of opinion. If community of Churchmanship is to depend upon multitudes of free and true men agreeing to numerous propositions, physical and metaphysical, alike incapable of proof, but each of which has adherents whose pertinacity is usually in the inverse ratio of their knowledge, then may we postpone such Christian fellowship to the Greek Kalends or the Apocalyptic Millennium.

Thus much of preface as to a probable divergence of views which, when truthfully and charitably entertained, I take to be more conducive to edification and mutual esteem than any conformity of a stereotyped sort. Why should not all be content to travel in the same direction by different paths and at different speeds? Dean Swift used to say it mattered little whether we journeyed Heavenward in a carriage-and-four or a donkey-cart, provided we did but get there; and the Emperor Constantine told a favourite bishop of peculiarly pedantic orthodoxy, that he must climb to Heaven on his own proper ladder, for nobody else would mount it with him.

But now to our theme,—time was when I could have written on the dismal dogma with more interest and earnestness than it at present inspires me with.

Not that I hold it, in its gross and literal acceptation, a whit less subversive of all religious and reasonable principles than I did years ago, when taking its matter more *au sérieux* and occasionally feeling its dyspeptic incubus weighing upon my own faith and trust in the goodness and mercy of God, the "Mercy that is over all His Works," and the "Mercy that endureth for ever!" Is it a *real* "Article of Belief" that we have to deal with? Does it exist in men's minds and make them miserable and make them mad, as it assuredly must, supremely miserable and desperately mad, if it exist at all as an earnest conviction in their spirit or understanding? My full persuasion is that no man of sound mind in sound body is nowadays ever seriously disquieted by the grisly phantom begotten of theologic hatred and conceived of theologic fear, the fear that indeed "has torment," the fear which Faith casts out as gibbering frantic blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, by imputing hate to the Supreme Spirit whose Being is Love, and endless vengeance to the God whose nature and property is ever to forgive. It is here, if anywhere, when turning back to this mediæval abortion of the *odium theologicum*, that one is reminded of Plutarch and Bacon in their identical relative estimates of "Superstition" and "Atheism." Who does not remember the manly and honest simplicity with which the noble old Bœotian tells us he would rather people said there was no Plutarch, than that Plutarch was fickle, passionate, and vindictive! How many folios of so-called Christian theology would kick the beam when weighed in divine scales against that little treatise of a dozen pages (*περὶ Δεισιδαιμονίας*) by a benighted heathen! And then our Chancellor!—"Better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him; for the one is unbelief, the other is CON-TUMELY!" Surely those two essays might be read in Churches as lessons approved by apostles who

denounce the beggarly elements of fanaticism, and proclaim faith without charity as nothing worth!—approved by evangelists and prophets who preach acceptable religion as “doing justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God.” Well may our great British regenerator of human thought talk of superstition being to religion as a monkey is to a Man, for never could any travesty by genus “*Simia*” exceed the parody that superstition has put upon religion, when trumpeting endless vindictive punishment for punishment’s sake in the name of the Deity who has proclaimed Himself as chastening whom He loveth, and loving whom He chasteneth!

You will remind me, perhaps, that this is emphatic language, and that I began by disclaiming any deep feeling on the subject; and I am quite sensible of the apparent inconsistency. The fact is, that one is prone to oscillate on such a topic between extreme indignation and very thorough contempt. A healthy mind will, no doubt, easily and at once shake itself free from morbid and lurid imaginations, that would deform and deface God’s beautiful universe by perpetuating misery and deifying evil as coequal and coterminate with good. And while under the bracing influence of such health and healthy surroundings, one is apt to be ashamed of fighting as one that beateth the air, with no adversary but the unwholesome illusion of feverish weakness or designing wickedness. The “hell-fire” of superstition is to Religion and Reason but an *ignis fatuus*, flickering among the dead bones and mouldering remains of ages darker than our own; and wise neighbours call no engines, and fill no buckets to put it out. From this point of view we can look at such “fire” calmly and talk about it composedly. But when again one remembers that mental health and strength are by no means the inheritance of us all, and that for hypochondria, dyspepsia, and hysteria, the spectral finger

that points to hell in another world, usually points down the road to *madness* in this—why, then, indignation once more is likely to get the upper hand of indifference. But even a less hideous and more frequent consummation than absolute insanity intrudes itself inevitably on attention, and is, to a religious and reverential estimate, totally incompatible with philosophic apathy. The doctrine, even when not earnestly believed in, but only languidly tolerated, as tending towards checking and alarming gross and ignorant vice by false but portentously horrible representations of distant penalties incurred—this doctrine, I maintain, is still fraught with irreligious and immoral mischief—as, indeed, in a universe under the ultimate sovereignty of Supreme Truth, *all* false teaching *must* be irreligiously and immorally mischievous. Let us go into the heated and feverish atmosphere that surrounds “popular preachers,” proclaiming, in the name of an Almighty, Allwise, and Allgood Godhead, the final and perpetual plunging into the fiery lake of the devil and his angels, with all the myriads of human sinners, heretics, infidels, and others, that cannot present an orthodox passport at heaven’s gate. Let us look round upon the excited and excitable crowd that feels a sensational thrill, almost allied to horrid pleasure, in the stupendous, infernal drama depicted for their edification, and then let us inquire for a moment into the nature of such edification. It assuredly is seldom of that highest sort which prompted Moses and Paul to reject their individual salvation unless that of their brethren could be simultaneously secured: “Blot me also out of thy book!” and “I could wish myself also accursed for my Brethren’s sake!” It is hardly a breach of charity to conclude that this is not quite the feeling that actuates the anxious benches of “Tabernacles” and “Ebenezers,” as they listen to fulminations of “hell-fire” reserved for all but the

elect few, to join whose *exceptional* "glory" they are naturally inclined to make a rush, under an impulse and watchword not absolutely identical with that of "loving their neighbour as themselves." Yet, without rising to the level of a Moses or a Paul, how often do we find simple sailors and soldiers, who, in the service of an earthly master, will scorn to hurry first into the boats that can save but a fraction of their company! How cheerfully will the noble fellows hold back till at least the women and children are made room for! But, it may be said, their threatening danger is only of natural death; while the religionists are in frantic terror of *supernatural* torments, &c., &c. Strange, at any rate, that a religious doctrine, preached in the name of Christ, should tend towards so low a pitch of selfishness as to be satisfied to be supremely happy with the knowledge of the supreme contemporary misery of their fellow-creatures! How does such doctrine look, when tried by the divine test of "knowing them by their fruits?" Or is this an exceptional case, in which the heavenly vine produces such very earthly thorns?

Turning from the human ethics consequent on the dogma that lends such point and zest to the oratory of popular pulpits, let us see how it stands with the system of celestial government in accordance with such theory. Those gentlemen who proclaim it would no doubt be much surprised to hear that their gospel of ultimate and infinite suffering is altogether incompatible with their worship of *one God*, Almighty and Allgood,—and that they are bound in logic and consistency to announce themselves henceforth as recognising *two* eternal principles, one of Good and the other of Evil, like Persians of old, or later disciples of the Heresiarch Manes. They are very possibly of opinion that, having done such poetical justice upon all fallen sinners, whether angelic or human, as casting them into the perpetual lake of burning brimstone,



nothing further can be required towards the vindication of sole and supreme Good throughout the universe. But surely this position cannot stand scrutiny. How can *supreme good* reign triumphant in a universe degraded and dishonoured by the *infinite* evil of endless unrepenting and unamending angelic and human misery? Were the agonies announced as of a limited or *purgatorial* kind, the case would of course be different, but it certainly does excite fair astonishment that the advocates of eternal *vindictive, non-curative,* and non-purifying punishments should not see that they are thereby maintaining a coequal sovereignty of evil with good, always, everywhere, and for ever. The seeming ignorance of, or indifference to, this inevitable *sequitur*, no doubt arises from such persons using the metaphysical words "infinite," "eternal," &c., in quite a limited and physical acceptation. But it is time, in the present stage of mental cultivation and era of exact science, that they should recast their *nomenclature*. They must learn to see and acknowledge that no evil can be greater than that of the endless sinful existence of spiritual beings, created in the image of God—multitudinous beings of such high origin, for *ever* unrepenting and unamending, of necessity cursing both the Creator that created them and the Creation that their endless sinful suffering darkens, deforms, and disgraces, to no purpose but that of inflicting pain and perpetuating cruelty!

I ought now, perhaps, in reference to my signature as a commissioned officer of our Established Church, to say a word or two as to the Biblical and Liturgical bearings of the dogma that I venture to condemn as not only anti-Christian but absolutely inhuman, and implying "contumely" to the God of Goodness. I have no difficulty or scruple whatever in asserting that, to the best of my judgment, the Bible not only ignores, but would absolutely anathematise, such doctrine as that which endeavours to brand Creation

with indelible failure and deformity, while dethroning the ONE God and Lord of all, in favour of a dualistic scheme of Ormuzd and Abriman, projecting through the universe the distorted semblance of a "house divided against itself." It ought not to be required that we should descend to the examination of mere Hebrew and Greek vocables to establish a truth, the miscarriage of which would be fatal to all claims of divine inspiration in the providential books that have been so venerated for decades of centuries by Jew and Gentile, Greek and Barbarian. Enough, surely, that we can appeal to the "Spirit" of these Scriptures that *always* quickens, without haggling over the "letter" that occasionally "kills." Not that in this case, as I apprehend, there can be any difficulty in securing the witness of the "letter" as well as that of the "Spirit" to the honour and glory of God. Yet who needs it who is already familiar with the Scriptural attributes ascribed to Deity, as ever culminating in goodness, and in mercy enduring for ever, and enfolding all his works in the "everlasting arms" that are spread beneath them? Why should we be tasked to gild refined gold and paint the lily white, by trying to strengthen, through iteration and variety of texts, such pandects of supreme truth and holiness as are expressed in passages of Old and New Testament, which every real lover of their lore will bind as signs upon his hands and frontlets between his eyes?

Let us appeal at once to the fountain-head of our Biblical allegiance, to the Teacher who has taught us to approach our God as our Father which is in heaven, ever ready to forgive us our trespasses as even we to forgive them that trespass against us! Think we, perchance, that any *human* malignity could ever reach the pitch of relentless and endless unforgiveness to its offspring, in whose behalf even a Roman dramatist would write *Pro peccato magno parvulum supplicii*

*satis est Patri.* "If ye, then," says the Christ, "*being evil*, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give to them that ask Him." Dare men, while worshipping such a God through such a Mediator, still venture to assert that He for bread gives us a stone, for fish a serpent, for an egg a scorpion! But away with figures of serpents and scorpions—mere maudlin metaphors to veil the ineffable *monstrum horrendum informe, ingens cui lumen ademptum*—"monstrous, hideous, blind, horrible, and huge," which would impute "hell fire" as the divine rejoinder to our poor human prayers to the "Lord of all power and might, declaring His Almighty rule most chiefly in mercy and in pity." Has the "contumely" of superstition, our Baconian "Monkeyism of Manhood," ever gone further or descended lower in travesty and caricature of a Godhead created in its own image?

Really Samson's riddle was easy reading compared with the theologic enigma that, instead of weakness out of strength, brings hatred out of love, and relentless vengeance out of infinite mercy and compassion! Many fantastic tricks have we sons of Adam played before High Heaven to make the angels weep; but here is surely a trick of Angry-Apism that would petrify angelic tears in blank amazement, to say nothing of classic philosophy, whether of the school that laughs or the school that weeps at the aberrations of our eccentric nature. We read of James and John asking their Lord's sanction for a mere *momentary* flash of earthly fire to consume his enemies, and how sternly does that Lord rebuke the spirit that suggested the wish, as emphatically no spirit of his! Yet there are those among us, neither few nor always of the dullest, who would confidently, in the name of the same Master, invoke flames of preternatural fire, to agonise perpetually, *without* consuming, the disputants who vex the pragmatic

zeal that found such small countenance from him in whose cause it bestirred itself. When one remembers, moreover, that Christ most unmistakably endorses the *really* divine law of *commensurate* and inevitable penalties of an instructive and chastening sort, as awaiting all transgressions of the moral or physical code of light and life, one feels that it is but taking pains to little purpose to argue against foregone conclusions.

Would any advocate of "infinite" penalties awaiting the very "finite" difference, moral or spiritual, between Messrs A and B, do us the favour to give their note and commentary on the text of "many stripes" due to the one, and "few stripes" due to the other? I would not willingly adopt a light tone in reference to so dismal a theory, but it is a law of our nature, that the "sublime" of unreason should stand in close contiguity to its corresponding extreme. Pardon me, then, for looking round on the countenances of the first dozen fellow travellers from Charing Cross to St Paul's, to conjecture, on available data, their future destiny as *eternal* heavenly angels or coeval infernal dæmons! O for the Egyptian sphynx or Athenian owl, to cast the horoscope of Mr Br—gs! Who does not at once recoil from conclusions too grossly preposterous to abide for a moment, when confronted with the barest sufficiency of sense and soberness that distinguishes us from idiots! The dogma, as already said, is a psychological phenomenon that sets aside all religion and all reason; and one cannot easily bring religious or reasonable argument to bear upon that which can only exist by strict denial of every elementary postulate of one or the other. If it really had any root in the hearts or heads of people outside an asylum, we should be in imminent danger of a collapse in any human society of which they were members. It would remove all our moral landmarks and confound all our moral

weights and measures, to a degree utterly incompatible with any healthy and honest intercourse with our kind; for what faith or hope could we have in fair dealing on earth, while stupendous false scales were hung up to our view in Heaven, in the name of that Lord to whom Religion and Reason have hitherto made them an abomination!

When the divine Head of Christendom dramatises the great "*Judgment according to Works*," surely He distinguishes the ethics of the gospel plainly enough from the false reckoning that would allot an *infinite* interval to the *infinitesimal* unknown X that represents the surplus of A's doings over those of his brother B. Put the "finite" into one dish of the balance and the "infinite" into the other, and we have an inconceivably small fraction of a grain weighed against a sum-total of tons, compared with which a rule of arithmetic digits reaching from London to Edinburgh would be as nothing! One has to talk in this way with the forlorn hope of fixing the attention of the volubility that trifles so complacently with words that stand for ideas unrealisable by the human brain. Is it not, after all, this utter unintelligibility of the questions mooted that can alone account for the phenomenon of intense irritability proverbial as *odium theologicum*, appropriating exclusively to itself the term "polemics" as satirically characterising the temper of disputing devotees, whose common principle and badge of recognition was to be their "Love of one another." Why do devotees of exact sciences indulge in no such venomous polemics? How hard it seems to our human pretention to acknowledge that we cannot see through the thick veil that it has pleased Providence to let fall between things earthly and things unearthly. How little we like to appropriate the lesson, "What is that to thee, follow thou me." "Do justice," that is, "and love mercy," leaving reverentially to God

the things that are God's, and as yet God's only. What should we say to monkeys bent on mathematics, with infinite nuts pending on the issue, and tearing one another to pieces over definitions and axioms of Euclid. Rage unspeakable and irrepressible between two sects, to one of which a triangle is assuredly *three* right angles, and to the other as positively *four*! "*Risum teneatis!*" *Fabula tamen de nobis narratur*—the case is pretty much our own.

Enough, however, for the moment as to broad views connected with the changeless principles of religion and reason. Let us now turn for an instant to that sort of argument that seeks, in the written "letter" of our sacred books, for ways and means of invalidating its divine "spirit." Do we not read repeatedly of "hell" and "everlasting fire" in the Old Testament and the New? and dare we doubt or reject such words on such pages? To the latter question the reply of Christ and his apostles is to *try* all such words, representing what ideas they may, and to hold fast to those alone of them that are *good*—trying, that is, the inky words on paper by the living words traced by the "finger of God upon the tablets of our heart" or conscience. No mistake about the revelations written *there*, and those that are *willing* to know them shall know of the doctrines whether they be of God (*Εάν τις θέλη γνώσεται*). True faith in such revelations, "saving us by the answer of a good conscience," would bravely and loyally renounce both Old Testament and New, though they had fallen, ready printed and bound, from heaven to earth, rather than for a moment sin against the Holy Ghost by imputing to it on their authority that which we *know* by its inspiration to be of the nature of evil. But here, happily, our faith is exposed to no such trial, for neither does the Old Testament nor the New say a word, to the best of my knowledge, which, fairly interpreted, can reduce us to choose between

"Bibliolatry" on the one hand, and that "liberty" of conscience on the other which always exists where the spirit of the Lord is. The least learned English reader can easily convince himself that the "hell" of the Old Testament is simply the word *שׁוֹלַיִם*, meaning a "hollow place," and habitually used as equivalent to "grave" or "tomb." Why our translators sometimes render it as "grave" and sometimes as "hell" is by no means clear. We should be surprised, for example, to read of the patriarch's "grey hairs being brought down with sorrow unto hell," or of Jacob "going down into hell unto his son mourning;" yet it is precisely the same word which, in the Psalms, is given as, "Thou shalt not leave my soul in hell," where it evidently means "grave," no less than in the other passages. When Jonah is represented as "crying out of the belly of hell," meaning the belly of the fish, every one knows that he refers to his living "tomb." But there is an unjustifiable laxity in substituting the one word for the other where popular misapprehension is so likely to follow. So much for the "hell" of the Old Testament, thus reduced from its mythological and monstrous acceptance to one with which we are all familiarly acquainted.

Next let us see how far the metaphysical idea of *endless* duration of time, or Eternity, is represented by the *וְעוֹלָם* of the Hebrew? It may be rightfully maintained that in the early epochs of Jewish literature, the *idea* of such transcendent duration had not yet dawned upon human intelligence, and, therefore, that the words *וְעוֹלָם* and *עוֹלָם* could never have represented a thought not yet extant in its bewildering vagueness. For many centuries the calculations of mankind were pretty much limited to the sum total of the digits at the extremities of hands and feet, and we all know that the prophets take refuge in sacred and indefinite numbers, *seven, forty, seventy, &c.*, where

precision might be embarrassing or needless. Certain it is that no confidence can be placed in our modern renderings of high numbers in the Pentateuch, and equally sure that we have no right to attach *our* notion of "everlasting," &c., to words which we find applied to the *hills* of Judea and the *possession* of the promised land, to the *lives* of kings, and so on. When Juda so beautifully pleads with Israel for leave to take Benjamin with him, and winds up with "If I bring him not back, let me bear the blame *for ever*," who is embarrassed with the עַד־עַד that we translate as "for ever," quietly accepting it, as every one does, for "all the days of my life." Turning to the pages of the New Testament on the same quest, what word do we find for this theological representation of endless fire, agonising irreclaimable sinners for duration of time mathematically endless? Simply the Syriac term "Gehenna," a corruption of "Valley of Hinnom," where, outside the walls of Jerusalem, the offal of the city and bones of malefactors were consumed; that is, "Gehenna" is a metaphorical expression for the disgrace, desolation, and destruction awaiting excommunicated sin and sinners, cast into outer lurid darkness, where weeping and gnashing of teeth are in full harmony with their surroundings.

When we read of Christ, that he pronounces causeless anger worthy of judgment (magisterial), and foul-mouthed abuse (*ῥακὰ*) liable to a higher court, but "thou fool" (*μωρὸς*), that is, deliberate contempt and scorn of arrogance, *versus* humility, liable to "hell-fire,"—can any disciple of Justice tempered by Mercy suppose this "Gehenna of Fire" to mean what popular superstition is taught to attach to the term, instead of forming the natural climax, as it probably does, to intramural penalties, culminating in being cast out to the dreary and unclean valley of burning bones? If Christ rebuked with such withering sarcasm the zeal of James and John, desiring fire to



consume the adversaries of his preaching, what cohesion or congruity can we find in a lesson that would inculcate *eternal* fire for the folly of inflated self-conceit depreciating its neighbours?

It is true, however, that this "Hinnom-Valley" is not the only equivalent for our expression "Hell-fire" in the New Testament. There is another term, the classical "*Hades*," meaning the *invisible* abode of departed spirits, but no more resembling our theologic Hell than a Greek statue is like a scare-crow. When the "gates of Hell" (*πυλαι ᾄδου*) are said to be powerless against the Church, this has no reference whatever to the "Gehenna" outside Jerusalem, but is the expressive Syriac-Greek metaphor for powers of dark ignorance, as opposed to the light, and life, and love of truth, which constitute the real "orthodoxy" of the Human Catholic Church. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus there is certainly mention of *fire* tormenting the rich man in Hades, but it must be a very prosaic spirit indeed that attaches the notion of material fire to the language of *Allegory* depicting *remorse* burning into memory the reproachful regret of gifts and opportunities wasted or abused.

All this may sound as minute and elementary criticism to those acquainted with the ancient languages of our two Testaments, but it cannot be quite superfluous as long as the doctrine we are considering even nominally defaces and defames the Gracious Gospel of Faith, Hope, and Love; of which the *last* is alone *eternal*, as being in itself the soul of the Godhead. Let us look again for the Greek word which we make to bear the weight of such portentous meaning (or rather *no* meaning), and we find a comparatively harmless *αἰώνιος* and *eis τὸν αἰῶνα*, signifying only duration of a limited sort, equivalent to "ages" or "centuries" with us. When the fig-tree is to bear no more fruit "for ever," what has that to do with *endless* time, when the life of the tree itself is but for

a few years? No doubt these words *are* used for indefinite or infinite duration, when the intention is to convey the highest possible idea of such duration, as of the word, or wisdom, or goodness of God; but they are equally used for *temporary* existence, and that carries with it all the weight of argument we require. When Jonah says, "The earth with her laws was about him for *ever*," he uses the Hebrew עולם, just as the New Testament uses εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα for the duration of the "house of Jacob;" as the prophets speak of "everlasting mountains," &c. The only important point is to save the credit of Scriptures otherwise responsible for a doctrine fatal to their claims to "infallibility." Enough that their language will bear a *good* meaning, to make it incumbent on us not to assign to it a bad one.

If the requirements of language had insisted on an acceptance of "everlasting," &c., incompatible with any limitation, we might have sought refuge perhaps in the ingenious bit of sophistry which maintains that *all* punishment is of necessity *eternal*; inasmuch as it is an *everlasting* deduction from the sum total of enjoyment. A magistrate, for example, fines us five shillings, and we are *for ever* poorer by said five shillings, than we should have been without such penalty; so also with imprisonment and bodily suffering, so much *for ever* subtracted from our normal stock of liberty and absence from pain. But we are not driven to such casuistry, though of a sort justifiable enough in self-defence against the unjustifiable despotism of dominant stupidity.

It might also be a question to moot, were it wanted, whether we can entertain any logical idea of an "eternity" limited *at one end*; whether, that is, any thing can be conceived as endless which has a beginning. My own impression is that it cannot, though I may be inadvertently running into "heresy" by saying so.

Between ourselves, as you are not going to turn Grand Inquisitor, I could confess to something like an Article of Belief, in the *eternity* of every thing that is, allowing for "circulation," with permutations, combinations, and the like. Was there ever a time when "matter" did not exist, or "time" either? "When Bishop Berkeley said there was no matter, 'twas no matter what he said," &c., &c. Excuse my trifling, to relieve for a moment the *very* heavy disquisition you have lured me into.

If I am right in saying that the literal Hell dogma is not in the Bible, it would of course follow from our VIth Article, that it is in no degree incumbent upon any one signing the XXXIX, maugre even the "Athanasian" Creed, which our Parliament in its wisdom still thinks fit to ratify and maintain. Apropos to which Anglican symbol, I cannot say that I, in my individual insignificance, have ever found it the pre-eminent stumbling block that it seems to many. In the first place, if I read it at all, it is in obedience to Parliamentary Law in our Parliamentary Church—and I consider myself free *not* to read it, provided I am ready to submit to the Parliamentary penalty for neglecting the rubric. Secondly, if I individually demur to its logical meaning, I can avail myself of the fact to which my attention was once called by an excellent and distinguished Spiritual Peer, viz., that the symbol is appointed to be either "said or *sung*." Now, as "singing" was never yet intended to be subjected to laws of strict reasoning, it would be like seeking difficulties to apply rules of dry logic to triumphant outbursts of "orthodox" rhythm, hymning victorious pæans of *Homoousion* victory over discomfited partisans of *Homoiousion* schism in the hot arena of Byzantian polemics! The argument as to the meaning of words applies, moreover, as well to the "Creed," whether prose or poetry, as to the Bible, and the "everlasting fire" seems threatened

rather to "doing evil" than to involuntarily believing correctly or incorrectly, which is at any rate some comfort to common sense. There can be no harm, however, in an obscure Presbyter echoing the wish of a bygone Primate touching "*Quicumque vult*," to the effect that "we were well rid of it."

The remark may not be worth much, but it is a remark many of us have, perhaps, made in reference to "Athanasian Creeds" and similar phenomena, that the "people," so called, find little or no difficulty, and make little or no objection, to them. In village congregations the "*Quicumque vult*," with its magnificent rhythm, much more effective than "Reason," is heard with great edification, and with very little of the scrupulosity about "damnatory clauses" that is apt to disturb more delicate and refined constitutions. The fact seems to be that dense and pachydermatous natures only experience agreeable sensations under a currycomb that would flay the skin of more susceptible subjects. The most popular pulpits are known to be those which fulminate the fiercest and loudest,—well illustrating Lord Bacon's apothegm, that the "People is the master of superstition, in which wise men follow fools, with arguments fitted to facts in reversed order." Archbishops and Bishops, and Presbyters, would be ready to be rid of a personified Devil and his doings on much easier terms than rustics would approve, and I well remember the story as told by the wisest and truest of living prophets and humourists, how the little lassie came weeping back from a discourse where "the gentleman said there was na' deil."

If there is one Scriptural book more peculiarly picturesque in imagery of fiery-lake scenery than another it is the Apocalypse, and *that*, as every one knows who knows country cottages, is beyond comparison the favourite village reading. Simple and uncritical, an agricultural population will revel in the gorgeous

imagery and stupendous machinery of visions of Patmos, impervious to doubts and difficulties which could make such a divine as South exclaim, more pointedly than decorously, that they "either found a man cracked or left him so." The strongest *imaginary* appeals have little effect upon natures rendered rugged and unimpressionable by constant contact with hard and rough realities, but exemplify your figurative "everlasting punishment" by showing such persons an old-fashioned "cat-o'-nine-tail" infliction, and *then* ask them what they would think of a doctrine teaching that *such* suffering was to be inflicted for *ever* by heavenly power upon human sinners: not for their amendment, but *only* for their punishment; not for the sake of saving discipline, but only for perpetuating sin and unrepenting maledictions.

Those who, knowing better, would countenance such horrid phantasmagoria, under the impression of *frightening* people from crime, are as wrong practically as they are morally and religiously. *Practically* such threats have no effect at all beyond lending vigour to the popular blasphemy that borrows their infernal vocabulary. If, indeed, such terrors *could* avail practically, we ought consistently to bring back the rack and the wheel to supplement the prison and the gibbet. We should be justified, for the general good, in pouring melted lead and boiling oil, as in good old times they did upon the body and limbs of a Ravaillac or a Damiens, approaching by human ingenuity, for an hour or so, to the agonies reserved by Theologic "Divinity" for the majority of mankind "for ever" and a day!

But in this, as in every attempt to change divine laws and improve them by human device, we inevitably go wrong. It will never answer to do evil that good may come, and the course of truth can never be forwarded by untruth. The Laws of Life are God's laws, and provide *inevitable* corresponding penalties

for all infraction of such laws, however they be distinguished as physical or moral. The "*Pœna claudo pede*" doctrine, teaching that the penalty is as *inseparable* from the offence of commission or omission as the shadow from its substance, is the only true and effective penal code; and till national education teaches *that*, it is no *religious* education, least of all a Christian, *i.e.*, of Judgment according to works or fruits. Every juriconsult knows that the *fear* of punishment is in the ratio of its certainty and propinquity, and by no means in that of its enormity and uncertainty. No man in his senses thinks himself bad enough for the "Hell-fire" with which he occasionally may hear himself menaced in a very indefinite way as to time, place, and circumstance. The worst criminal, moreover, shrinks religiously from the personification of Deity painted as infinite strength wreaking insatiable vengeance upon infinite weakness. It would be an apotheosis or consecration of iniquity, like that of Lucifer's "Evil be thou my Good!"

Teach, only teach, in God's name, that as surely as fire, if we defy it, will burn us, and water drown us, so surely will the defiance of any other law bring inevitable and terrible penalty in its train, and *that* is education for time and for eternity. Teach that poison is poison, whether it poisons the body or the soul, with the only difference that the moral poison of untruth or injustice poisons our *human*, the other only our animal constitution. Away with the unworthy dream of God's inflicting mere *vindictive* punishments, as tormenting without instructing or improving. Teach that His laws for body and soul are only in so far inexorable as they are unchangeable, and that no folly can equal that which flatters itself with hope of escape from the inevitable. What should we say of one who pitched himself from a precipice with the hope of escaping or defying the "law of gravitation?" *Ex uno omnia discamus.* What bird is that that buries its head in the sand to escape observation?

I had no notion of writing so much upon a subject for which a dozen words might seem exhausting, and must hasten to a full stop. I began by saying that the "Monstrum Horrendum," we have been talking about, was begotten of Theologic hatred out of Theologic terror, but happily, by divine Providence was, as it could only be, an "abortion" from the first. I have not been attempting so much to argue against belief in the hideous phantom, as against the more or less prevalent disposition to "make believe" as believing it. I do not suppose that any sane individual believes it, or *can* believe it, and remain sane; but here, as elsewhere, the canker-worm of "Sham" is eating, by Parliamentary sanction, into our National entrails, and till Nationally, both in Church and State, we speak truth, and think truth, we are but a weak People, though we case our ships in iron a yard thick, and hurl ton-weight shot across our Channel. If we believe in God we must trust in truth and shame the Devil, or *ignore* him, as either may tend to greater edification.

We have no time to inquire as to the precise where and when of the first apparition of the grim imagination conjured up by human malice and fear to confound all faith and hope, as well as all sense and soberness. Its latitude and longitude we, of course, know to be Byzantine, and the date of its full development in the wilderness of Scholastic-Theology to have been that of the Nicene Synod about year 325 of our æra. Of that Council, so pregnant of results theologic rather than evangelic, but little in the way of circumstantial detail has been handed down. We read that what most impressed the nearly contemporary heathen historian Ammianus, was the wonderful ferocity of party spirit that marked the controversies of *Homoousions* and *Homoiousions*—Athanasians, that is, and Arians—tearing one another to pieces for dialectic and philologic niceties that had

centuries before harmlessly puzzled the sublime brain of a Plato in the cool groves of the Athenian Academy, now, alas! destined to rouse inextinguishable wrath and hatred in the hot arena of Byzantine faction. Such faction, we must remember, was now no longer mere speculative theorising on the Platonic, Johannic, or Alexandrian Λόγος, but involving practical results, carrying with them no less than the distribution and possession of all the new and vast Ecclesiastical patronage of the Roman Empire. We may in some measure then, at least, comprehend the breadth and depth of the passions invoked among crowds of ignorant burly monks, on either side, assembled to back their leaders in debate on questions which they understood, as peasants may be supposed to have understood Plato, but on the decision of which hinged, as they might readily be persuaded, their chances of preferment in this world and the next. When such a head as that of Athanasius reeled, by his own confession, over thoughts and theorems the longer studied the less mastered, we may imagine the effect they would work on the dull brains of hundreds of coarse and ignorant partisans summoned to the vote in numbers that the Historian describes as fatal to the post-horses of the Imperial service. The Council of Nice is said to have been attended by some 2,000 orthodox and heterodox zealots, whose zeal was apparently not less furious and not less sanguinary than that which afterwards, on more worldly pretexts, deluged the new Roman capital with frantic slaughter. Old Rome had seen the blood of gladiators and wild beasts shed in torrents for the pleasure of a brutal populace, but the walls of the Coliseum had never witnessed our human nature so demoniacally maddened as in the City of Constantine, in behalf of a Cause whose badge and test is that we "Love one another." *Nullæ tam infestæ hominibus bestię quam sunt sibi ferales plerique Christianorum,* is the



commentary of a contemporary annalist. Gregory Nazianzus, Archbishop of Constantinople, withdrew from its fury to the Cappadocian desert, declaring that the "Kingdom of Heaven" had been turned into Hell and Chaos.

*Such* hell and chaos was the cradle of the "Credo" that would still enthrone hell and chaos on the site of the Church of Christ, against which it stands recorded that the gates of hell shall *not* prevail. Surely the cradle was worthy of the nursling. Is it fair to charge the anathemas of the anonymous Athanasian Creed to the credit of the Nicene which contains no anathemas in its present form?

Once deduct the "clauses" from the Athanasian symbol, and even the most ardent votaries of popular "fire and brimstone" might be puzzled to find Biblical or canonical footing for their favourite doctrine. When Wesley held on strictly to "Witchcraft," because Witchcraft is Biblical, he was at least logically true to his "Bibliolatry," though it unavoidably led to a good man and able scholar linking himself to an obsolete absurdity. Yet was the moral and religious mischief of his superstition *infinitesimal* compared with that which results from ascribing perpetual and infinite evil to the one omnipotent source of supreme good. What disturbances in the divine scheme of the universe consequent on the stupid torturing of helpless and harmless old women, could compare with that emanating from endless and useless vindictive torment inflicted on the majority of our race at the *fiat* of a power whom we are taught to praise for mercy over all His works, or at worst, with "wrath enduring but as the twinkling of an eye?" The partisans of this "contumely" cannot plead the Biblical sanction that Wesley fairly urged for his puerility. Oriental imagery picturing the worm never dead, and the fire never quenched, neither would nor could suggest the theologic "Hell" to any sane under-

standing, while studying words of Christian life and truth, *culminating* in the charity that thinketh no evil.

Not in our Hebrew or Greek scriptures, whose spirit is always *ultimately* that of doing justice and loving mercy, but in hot fermentations of hate and fear, seething in that Nicene Basilica, is to be found the birth of the most portentous phantasm that ever darkened mythology, whether of Jew or Gentile, Greek or Barbarian. Yet if, as seems certain, this dogma of divine vengeance (infinite power tormenting infinite weakness) be by no means Biblical, how comes it in any sort to be "Anglican," or why should such a question in these later days be forced intrusively on sensible and sober consideration? This deponent ventures the inquiry but not the answer, unless by respectful glance, "*quousque tandem,*" towards Lords and Commons at Westminster. *Suum cuique; with them* it rests that such "things be so ordered and settled by their endeavours upon the best and surest foundations, that peace and happiness, truth and justice. . . ." We can all complete the quotation.

Depend upon it, as "witchcraft" has so lately found its way to limbo, it cannot be long before the grimmer superstition follows in its wake, leaving no trace but that of contrite amazement at the "contumely" that Christendom so long connived at. I venture to maintain that the Bible has never sanctioned it, but it were only a halting allegiance to truth to shirk the avowal that, *had* the Bible sanctioned it, in every book from Genesis to Apocalypse, it would not be less the duty of every religious and reasonable man to reject it with all his strength of spirit and understanding as "contumely" to the honour and glory of God. We must choose in such case between tablets of pen and ink and those of our own heart traced indelibly by the divine hand. It is

the refusal to do this that still constitutes our difficulty and our "idolatry." It is this idolising a book, as a palladium fallen down from Jupiter, that still shows us trammelled in the bonds of *Fetichism*. It matters not how good the book, its *worship* is not the use but the degrading abuse of its goodness, and never was stronger example of *corruptio optimi pessima*. It is this "Bibliolatry" that is the bane and paralysis of Protestantism, riveting on our necks a dead yoke of "stereotype" more slavish and grievous than that living yoke of a Roman hierarchy which the great mental move of the 16th century lifted for a while from our wrung withers. We must get rid of this incubus, or our Protestantism will protest to little purpose against the logic-disciplined legions of Rome on the one hand, or the anarchic rabble of Babel on the other. If "Protestantism" be less than a protest against *all* authoritative unreason, it is but a lame thing travelling neither on two legs nor four. If we would hold our own we must read our Providential book on its own terms, *trying* its conclusions, whether of "letter" or "spirit," before the tribunal of our own conscience and intelligence—a defective tribunal, no doubt, but the only one we can appeal to, and by God's grace sufficient for the nonce. We must typify Biblical wisdom by that of the serpent sloughing skin after skin and scale after scale to reappear again and again in renewed or regenerate splendour. As it has sloughed away "witchcraft," "Mosaic cosmogony," and the like, so assuredly will it slough away a local "hell," a personal "devil," and sundry other dead scales that dim and deform its vital and integral beauty. Our slavish allegiance to the "letter" of a literature, however sacred and providential, is as powerful a weapon in the armoury of Antichrist as that of the "scholasticism" that dates its reign from the Council of Nice, and to which, among other boons, we are

indebted for the minatory hell-fire still extant by sanction of Church and State. There is, no doubt, a respectable halo of antiquity about such Byzantine polemics that lends them a *présteige* not intrinsically their own; but if we must lean upon "Councils" of ancient date, why not go back 300 years further to another Council, where an Ambassador of a Gospel other than Athanasian *reasoned* also before Royalty, not indeed on metaphysical OUSION or OISION, but upon lowlier topics of "righteousness and temperance," and *judgment* to come (Acts xxiv. 25). This argument is addressed to Felix. That at which King Agrippa was present is subsequent (ch. 26), and before Festus, *almost* persuading King Agrippa to be a Christian! Would it be very rash to conjecture the Athanasian clamour of wrath and unreason, *almost* persuading the shrewd Imperial Constantine, again to be a *Pagan*!

But let me conclude a much longer lucubration than intended or needed, by "summing up" to the effect that the popular dogma of "Everlasting Hell-fire" is a chaotic imagination totally subversive of all religious and moral principle. So far is the doctrine from being endorsed by Biblical authority, that it is absolutely and diametrically opposed to the Pandects of divine justice and mercy *gradually* unfolded in its pages, till finding their climax in our Evangelic "Sonship" to a Father which is in heaven. What is not "Biblical" cannot (by Article VI.) be part or parcel of Church-of-England doctrine, as legalised by Parliament. Neither, independently of such Article, is there anything in its liturgical or canonical teaching that, fairly interpreted, would countenance such perversion of the gracious message of goodwill to man as published by Christ. The ascription to "paternal deity" of gratuitous and endless punishment inflicted on His offspring is, moreover, while removing all our landmarks of morality, most dangerously calculated to

distract our attention from the true, benevolent, and instructive code that *inevitably* visits with *inevorable* but reclaiming chastisement every violation of divine law, whether material or mental. And so, my dear Scott, having fulfilled an old promise, perhaps more fully than you expected or desired, by vindicating a plain truth with a lengthy development of "truisms,"

Believe me,

With Faith in the Love that casts out Fear,

Yours truly,

FOREIGN CHAPLAIN.

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POSTSCRIPT.

Since the above was written, the following admirable "Appeal to the Orthodox" has appeared in *The Manchester Friend* of Oct. 15, 1873. The writer is so much in harmony with my friend the "Foreign Chaplain," that I cannot resist the temptation of giving to his article all the publicity in my power.

THOMAS SCOTT.

"APPEAL TO THE ORTHODOX."

If there *be* a place of torment to which sinners are consigned at the day of judgment, the existence of such a place is by infinite degrees the most important fact in the Universe. Compared with so vivid a reality, the material world is an unsubstantial dream, and Heaven itself a colourless abstraction. The one surpassing object, which is alone worthy of our anxious care, is the means of escape from so horrible a destiny. And as God is a just and righteous Being, who would not entrap His creatures blindfold

into so piteous a doom, He would not leave one of those creatures in a state of doubt as to its reality. If there *be* a Hell, therefore, and if there *be*, as we reverently trust, a righteous Ruler of the universe, the existence of that hell must be a patent and conspicuous fact, attested by a species and a mass of evidence which no sane intellect could think of questioning. And if no such evidence be producible, we are bound by common sense, as well as fealty to our Creator, to reject the fable of its existence as an outrage on His righteous character.

Now, we do not complain that there are difficulties connected with the doctrine of an everlasting hell, nor yet that its evidences fall short of what we deem desirable; our contention is that there is no substantial warrant of any kind for its existence. During the thousands of years throughout which, according to the popular notion, men have been falling by myriads into this place of torment, and that under the ever-watchful eye of our Heavenly Parent, there is not an authentic instance of any person who has come back to forewarn his friends of the fate which he is now realising, and which is supposed to await every unconverted sinner. If there were any truth in this ghastly superstition, and if it were the will of God that we should believe in it, He has only to throw open the prison-doors for one brief interval, and millions of our forefathers, like Dives in the parable, would rush back to earth to give us warning of our danger. Or, if it were matter of vital moment that we should believe in it, He has only to expand our spiritual vision, and the mysteries of the unseen world would be as plain to us as the material universe now is to our bodily perceptions. There can be no lack of means to Omnipotence; if this doctrine were not a figment of man's invention, He would reveal it to us in ways which would leave no room to suspect its verity.

But if we have no Divine warrant for the truth of this dogma, we have metaphysical sophistry which is tendered us in lieu of it. In the first place it is asserted that sin against an Infinite God must partake of the infinite nature of the Being whose law it violates; that it is an infinite sin, in short, and must receive an infinite punishment. That this is nothing but a play upon words is evident from two considerations. If a sin committed *against* an Infinite Being be infinite, a sin committed *by* a finite being is finite; and, therefore, sin is at the same time infinite and finite, venial and unpardonable. And, again, if an offence against an Infinite Being deserve an infinite punishment, obedience to an Infinite Being will deserve an infinite reward; and, therefore, every sinner who complies with any of the Divine enactments is at once entitled both to everlasting torment and to everlasting blessedness. All such reasoning is the merest verbal sophistication; such terms as "infinite" have no practical significance when applied to human actions. They only amount to the very obvious truism that the consequences of our deeds, whether good or evil, are incalculable: in an abstract sense they may be said to endure for ever; but for the most part their effect is incalculably small, and counts for nothing in the mighty play of conflicting forces.

There is another argument which is intended to supply the place of evidence upon this subject. We are told that our conscience teaches us that sin merits everlasting chastisement, and that our conscience is the voice of God in this matter. This argument is doubly delusive; its assumed data are untrue, and its conclusion does not follow from the premises. Our conscience is the voice of God in this sense only: it is the highest authority that He has given us for our individual guidance: in no case can it be assumed as the absolute expression of His will. And, as a

matter of fact, the teaching of our conscience varies with each individual, and varies very much in accordance with the training which we have received. It is not true that the conscience of mankind has pronounced in favour of eternal punishment. There may be a few men of disordered minds, like the unhappy Cowper, who really believe that they deserve an infinite measure of Divine wrath, and there are millions of Christians who verbally assent to the doctrine on the authority of others; but this belief is not shared by the most enlightened section of mankind. Where the voice of conscience is not overpowered by some external authority, its teaching is very different. When we knowingly sacrifice our bodies through intemperance, it may suggest to us that we deserve to lose our health, if not our life, in consequence; when we wilfully wrong our neighbour, it will probably warn us that we deserve not only to forfeit the goodwill of our fellow-men, but likewise to suffer all such punishment as the loss of that goodwill may carry in its train; and so long as we refuse to bow our heads in submission to our chastisement, we shall probably experience a sense of alienation from the Author of that chastisement; but of penalties protracted through the cycles of eternity it gives us no intimation. So little does the average conscience speak about the heinousness of sin, that the majority of mankind would seem to hold that there is scarcely any offence for which some trifling penance will not make atonement; and many excellent Christians are of opinion that an instantaneous act of faith in the sacrifice of Christ will blot out a life-time of iniquity. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved," is the accepted formula.

In truth, however, this sort of reasoning would satisfy no one who was not already convinced upon other grounds. It is the supposed authority of Jesus which has persuaded Christendom of the reality of an



everlasting Hell. Now, while I have no wish to detract from the sublime character of Jesus, in some respects unique in human history, I am constrained to observe that on such a subject his authority has no validity for us. There is no proof that he possessed omniscience. Assuming the truth of the record, there is, on the contrary, ample evidence that his knowledge was limited in extent. If we may so far credit the Evangelists, he was a believer in all the current legends of his time. The stories of the Noachian Deluge, and the miraculous destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and even the grotesque legend of Jonah and the whale, were received without misgiving as to their historic truth. He was impressed with an intense conviction of the approaching ruin of the world. "This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled." His belief in diabolical possession was simple and unquestioning. One of the Evangelists expressly intimates that he "increased in wisdom;" that is to say, his knowledge was subject to the universal law of growth in accordance with experience; and another represents him as acknowledging his ignorance of the exact period at which the world should be destroyed. In none of the Gospels will the attentive reader discover the least indication that upon any subject, scientific, literary, or historical, he possessed greater knowledge than his contemporaries. Indeed it is plain to any critical insight that he was much less well informed than the Apostle Paul, for example. There is no use in shrinking from this admission; it is the truth, and we cannot alter it. God is not honoured by the suppression of such facts.

But even in theological matters his language shows that he had no definite knowledge beyond that shared by his fellow-countrymen. "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven" is a vague declaration, to which almost any meaning might be assigned.

"More than twelve legions of angels" is another loose expression, which will not admit of rigid definition. "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched," is figurative language, and cannot be construed literally. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal," evinces no perception of the important truth that the great majority of mankind are neither "righteous" nor "wicked," but more or less imperfect strugglers after righteousness. Nearly all his reported utterances upon this subject are hasty generalisations which are incompatible with exact knowledge, and have no validity for conscientious thinkers in this nineteenth century.

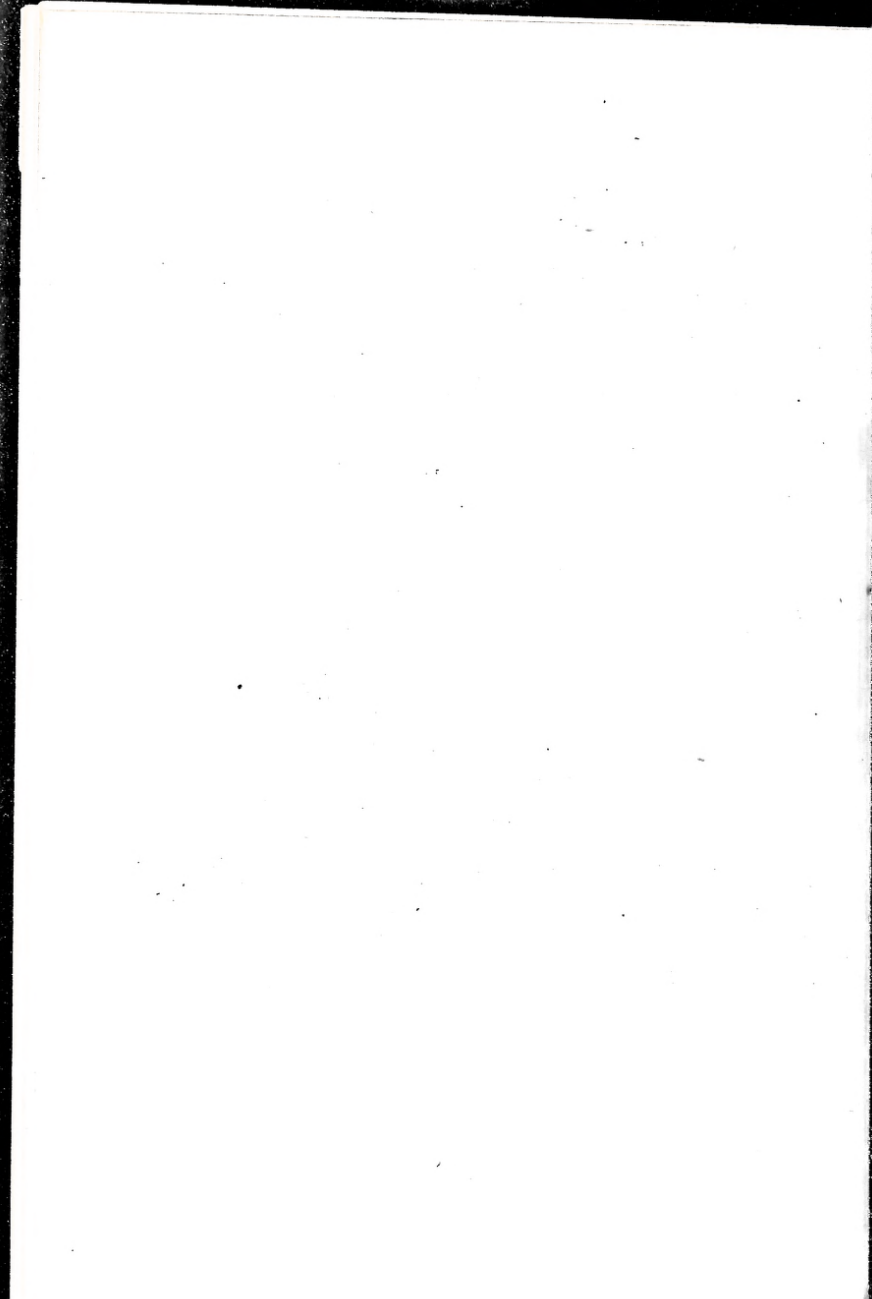
Nor is it at all demonstrable that he was the author of any of these utterances. Many of them, in all probability, have been rightly ascribed to him; but this is the most that can be affirmed respecting them. It is tolerably certain that he left no written exposition of his doctrine, and that none of our canonical Gospels was committed to manuscript for years after his crucifixion; not until a mass of legendary matter had time to grow up around his real biography. None of these brief and inadequate sketches can be traced directly to his disciples; indeed there is not one which is authenticated by any writer who had personal knowledge of its author. In the second century, and by such men as Papias and Irenæus, they were ascribed to our four reputed Evangelists; but this is all that can be positively affirmed. I need hardly remark that if hell were the greatest of realities, affecting the everlasting welfare of a large proportion of mankind, a just and righteous Father would not leave us to extract our knowledge of it from the opinions of Papias and Irenæus, nor yet from the legendary narratives of our four Evangelists.

When they are construed with a due regard for the limitations of human knowledge, these reported

sayings of Jesus are invaluable proclamations of the truth that sin is an enormous evil, and has momentous consequences; a truth which all experience verifies; but how far those consequences may extend into the unseen world, God has not revealed, nor are we at liberty to dogmatise. From our general experience of His government, however, we may righteously believe that in whatever sense our punishment pursues us beyond the grave, that punishment will be remedial in its object, and will result in our final restoration to purity and peace.

RATIONALIST.





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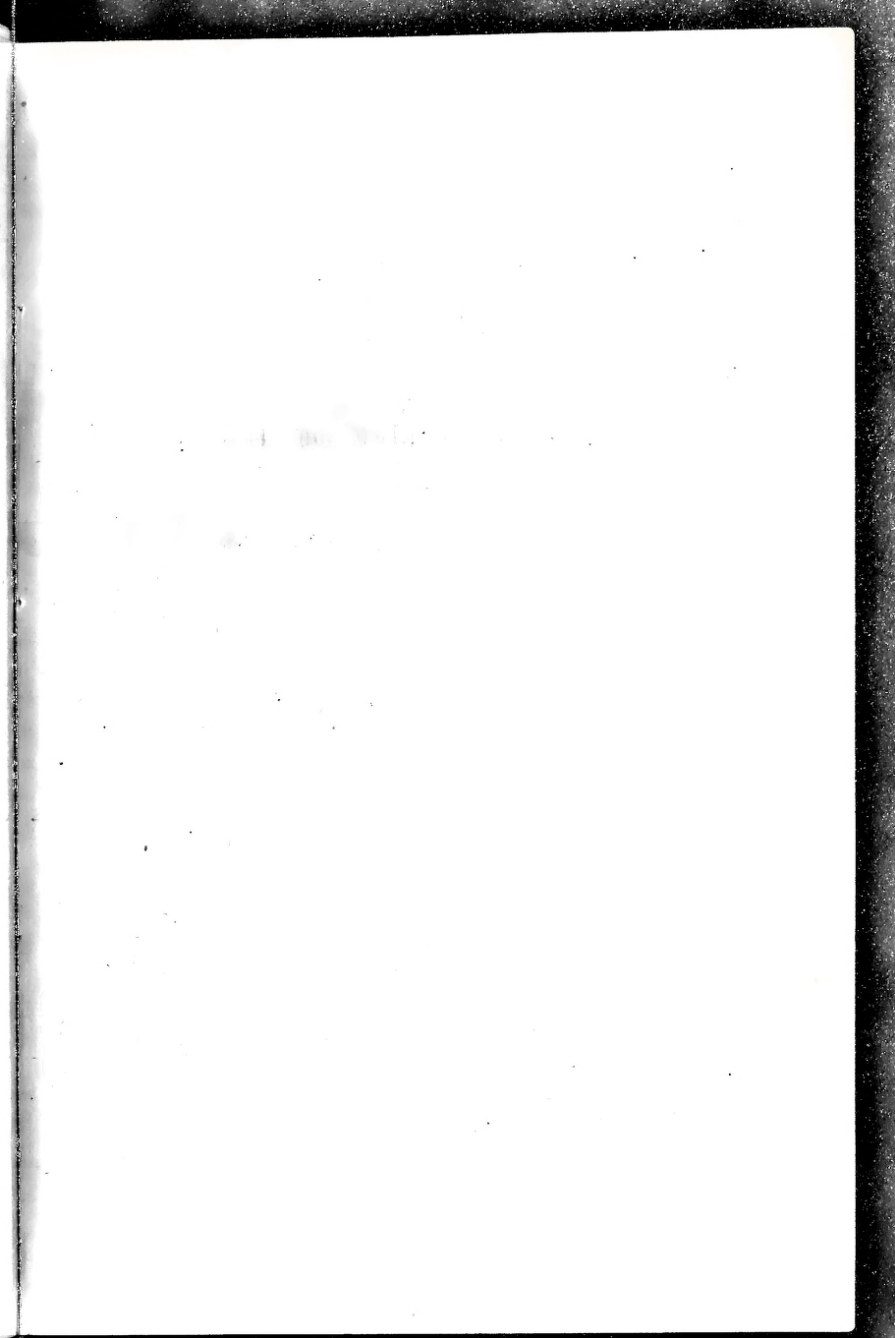
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