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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

CLOUDS AND SUNSHINE.

Oh, this world is strange and changing,
Full of lights, and full of shades,
As the streamlet slowly winding
In and out through dells and glades.
For a little, all is sunshine—
Then in shadow darkly bound,
Onward through the dusky darkness
Where the sunshine is not found.

So is life, with joy and sorrow
Intermix'd from day to day;
Not in equal portions always,
As we wend our destined way.
O'er the lives of some, the shadow
Of a bitter fate is cast—
And the clouds hang thick, and gloomy
Shading joys too dear to last:

Joys which came and went so quickly
That the darkness seem'd more drear,
As the "blue sky" all was hidden,
And the heart was fill'd with fear.
But the light is born of shadow;
And the sunshine is more sweet
After days of dreary darkness.
Have gone by with laggard feet.

Do not droop in sad despondence
Though the clouds have fill'd thy sky—
For a ray of golden glory
Gilds the ranks that rifted lie.
And through life, if we but see it
Is a firm hand guiding well;
In that Hand our fates are resting,
Clouds or sunshine, none can tell.

Let us trust our faithful Pilot
For His arm is true, and tried,
He can move us safely over
To the land beyond the tide,
Land where all is perfect glory;
Where the shadows never come;
Where the wicked cease from troubling,
Find we there our rest and home.

VIOLET.

Religious.

THE FUTURE STATE OF THE WICKED.

LETTER II.

NOTES: METHODS, CANONS, SYSTEMS OF THEOLOGY—DESTRUCTION—PUNISHMENT AND CHASTISEMENT—EVERLASTING—ETERNAL LIFE, DEATH—GHEENNA—THE WRATH OF GOD—THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

1. METHODS, CANONS, and SYSTEMS OF THEOLOGY.—The sum of all that has been stated thus far is that men are represented in Scripture as living after death. Their souls survive, some in bliss, some under chastisement. They are to be summoned to judgment, and after the judgment they are sent away into punishment that is described by all the words used in the New Testament to set forth the everlastingness of the blessedness of the righteous. The words "death" and "destroyed" are applied to the condition of men in this world. They are, therefore, consistent with continued life in the next.

These expressions, which are all taken from Scripture, I understand in their usual Scripture sense. We need no theory on the natural immortality of the soul, no systematic theology on the nature of the Fall or on Redemption, no special canons of interpretation, to explain them. The words speak for themselves; and I believe that if it were not for theories on other subjects, or the difficulty we feel in admitting the doctrine they teach, the interpretation would stand without dispute.

At the same time, if the words thus used represent the truth, it must be defensible on sound canons of interpretation, and it must harmonise with sound, systematic views of the Gospel itself. I willingly accept these conditions.

The only canon of interpretation concerned in the case is that words must be understood in their common meaning *i. e.*, in the meaning common to the authors who use them, until some other meaning is shown to be required by the context or by other teachings of those authors.

The common meaning, I repeat is the most probable one in each case: the

common meaning, not necessarily the *literal* one, for reasons which Whately gives.* What the rule means is that, if in nine instances out of every ten a word has one meaning, and in the tenth instance another meaning, the probabilities are as nine to one that it has the common meaning in any new instance. Of course, the "burden of proof" rests with the man who takes it in the "odd" sense.

Now to apply this rule. Books have been written to prove that "life," the opposite of "death," is in Christ. What is the meaning of "life"? I turn to a Concordance under *Zoe*, the true Greek word for it, and I find that in five cases out of every six (or thereabouts) life is a special blessing, given to all who believe. They were *living men* before they received it; and bad men, who are living men, are without it. Therefore, the life is not existence, but something which while implying existence, is much more. Occasionally, the word is used of the life we all live on earth, the "life which is as a vapour that passeth away;" but the deeper meaning is the common one. The "death," which is the opposite of this life, is the state of those who are without it, a state that is ascribed again and again to living men. This meaning of life may not be found in "Liddell and Scott," but it will be found many times in the Old Testament, more than fifty times in the New Testament, and is the *common meaning of the word* there. The common meaning is of course to rule.

"To save," "salvation," "Saviour," are words that occur 140 times in the New Testament. In 100 passages they have a spiritual meaning. In forty they refer to literal healing or physical deliverance. "Destruction" is the opposite term. Sometimes it is used literally, sometimes spiritually. Nearly all the literal meanings of "save" (37 of them) are in the Gospels, as are most of the literal meanings of "destroy." In the Epistles the spiritual meaning of each is the most common. In giving, therefore, to "salvation" and its opposite, "destruction," their spiritual meaning we are only acting upon the canon just named.

Once more. Nine times out of every ten the words "everlasting" and "for ever" are used in the New Testament of God and Christ and the blessedness of the redeemed, and mean properly, I suppose, "everlasting." In each tenth case it is used of the punishment of the wicked. Is not the first usage the usage "that ought to rule"?

If, therefore, we take the words—Life, Death, Salvation, Destruction, Everlasting,—in their common meaning—the "ruling meaning," as it has been called, the discussion is at an end!

Attempts to get rid of the doctrine we are discussing by appealing to some comprehensive theory on the design of the Gospel, take two forms. A theologian may say, man is naturally mortal, in every part, body and soul. Death was threatened as the penalty of sin. Death is simply the taking away of the life (the *Psyche*) of the sinner: for so our first parents must have understood the term. They saw brutes die, and could have no other conception than that they themselves were to die as the brutes. The teaching of the New Testament corresponds. Men die through Adam, as he was to die, and as brutes die.

"Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was first spoken of the soul."

Eternal life, however—*i. e.*, eternal existence—is the Gift of Christ for all who believe, but for none besides. Of course it follows that "destruction," annihilation, is the destiny of all whose original nature remains through unbelief unchanged.

Or, the theory takes another form. Whatever may have been the original nature of the man, the consequences of the first sin, and the meaning of the penalty denounced against it, the promise of the Gospel, it is said, is one of universal salvation. Christ is to reconcile *all things* unto Himself. God sent His Son that the

*Whately, Logic, bk. iii. § 16.

world might be saved. The *free gift* is as wide as the condemnation. God being the Saviour of *all men*, and specially of those who believe, must be the Saviour of those who *do not believe*.† And, therefore, punishment must end and end for ever in a blessed life.

There are specimens of theological systems held in support of the views we are now discussing. One or two remarks may be allowed in relation to them.

(1.) They are mutually destructive, and cannot both be true. Universalists, from the time of Origen downwards, deny annihilation; and Annihilationists, from Justin downwards, deny universalism. Systems, therefore, are no more helpful in settling this dispute than simple interpretations—rather less it seems.

(2.) The first system depends largely on what Adam understood by death. He may in his unfallen state have understood less than three-fourths of all nations have understood by it—for that death is to man more than to brutes is the common faith of the world. He had small knowledge of *ill*, we know, and perhaps he failed to grasp all the meaning of this summary of all ills. Yet why, even if it were so, should God mean no more, and we understand no more, than he? Is his understanding of the first promise to be our rule?—and if not, why is his supposed understanding of the first threat? The second system depends largely on wide and sweeping generalisations in the New Testament taken out of their contexts, and without reference to far more numerous and more clear statements of an entirely different kind.

(3.) The notion that the life (*Psyche*) of brutes is the same as the life (*Psyche*) in man is not so much humbling as degrading, is largely contradicted by nearly all nations, as it is by Scripture itself and by Jewish belief. If any reader will turn to "Soul" (the common rendering of *Psyche*) in Cruden, he will find that in by far the majority of passages the word means in both Testaments what is in man the seat of affection, thought, religious conviction, holiness, and sin, though sometimes it means the natural or *animal life* in man—the thing we give up when we die. The word, however, is very rarely used in the Old Testament of the life of brutes, and only twice (Revelations viii. 9; xvi. 3), in the New. Yet it is practically on this view of the soul that the annihilation argument rests.

(4.) The Universalist passages are nearly all restricted in meaning in the contexts where they are found. God sent His Son to *save* the world, not to judge it; and yet He will judge it, and in the issue those who *believe not* will perish. The "free gift," which is thought to be as wide as "the judgment," is restricted in Romans to those who "accept it" (Rom. v. 17); while the notion that God is the Saviour of all "who do not believe" is corrected by the teaching of the same Epistle that there are deceitful lusts which drown men "in destruction and perdition"—not surely a "blessed life." But besides—

(5.) These arguments, based on the general designs of the Gospel,—systems of theology such as they are,—prove nothing except the consistency of each system, not with Scripture teaching, but with itself. Men adopt a system which denies the plain teaching of Scripture and then boast that the new meaning they give that teaching matches their system, and therefore it is true. The common view of eternal punishment is equally consistent with the common systems of truth, and is so far as likely to be true as the other views, while it has the immense advantage of interpreting the teaching of Scripture on punishment according to the plain meaning of the words.

II. DESTRUCTION.—It is a favorite doctrine with some writers that when men are "destroyed" they cease to be, and that when God "destroys" them He annihilates them—systematic theologians not withstanding.

The question is, of course, one for dictionaries in part to settle. Does *apolumi* always mean to annihilate? and are *apoleia* and *olethros* always annihilation?

†Dr. John Young—*The Creator and the Creation.*

I turn to "Liddell and Scott," and find that the Greek verb means to kill, to lay waste or ruin, to bore one to death, to perish or die, to be undone or ruined, to be lost; and examples of each meaning are given from classic authors. A house, it seems, may be "destroyed" by fire, a land by war, a man by his pride. Herodotus even tells us what the Getæ believed became of a man when he was "destroyed," and how he was supposed to go afterwards into the presence of one of their gods. The noun (*olethros*) means ruin, destruction, death, and when applied to persons—one who is the ruin or the plague of another. I turn to "Wahl" and find that in the Greek Testament the word means to destroy—*i. e.*, (1) to take away life, (2) to undo, to ruin without any idea of annihilation, (3) to make useless, and (4) to make utterly miserable, spoken of those who are excluded from eternal life. Then it means—to be lost, and is the word applied to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, and to the Prodigal Son. These are not opinions of theologians, but of lexicographers.

Of course, however, the lexicographers are only witnesses, the true authority is actual usage. Is, then, destruction used in Scripture for annihilation and nothing else? The prosperity of fools is said to "destroy" them. (Prov. i. 32.) Is that always annihilation? Must the sheep be annihilated before we can pronounce a curse upon those "that destroy them?" Jer. xxiii. 1.) Did Christ come to seek and to save that which was annihilated? Was the Prodigal Son annihilated before he was found? Was it annihilation the evil spirit feared when he asked, "Art thou come to destroy us?" (Mark i. 24.) Was it not rather the "abyss," the bottomless pit, the "torment before the time," of which the spirits speak elsewhere? When Christ died for the people was he annihilated; (Jno. xviii. 14.) Was it for the annihilation of the flesh that the incestuous member was excluded? (1 Cor. v. 5.) Did God annihilate the men who "perished in the flood"? (2 Pet. iii. 6.) Have the Israelites whom God "destroyed in the wilderness" been annihilated? (Jude 5. 11) and all the unbelievers of Rahab's day? (Heb. xi. 31.) And is there for them no resurrection of the just and of the unjust? Will none of them appear in the judgment—"hear His voice and come forth"? In all these cases the "destruction" is said to be past; and yet those to whom it is applied are supposed to be still living—some to be saved and others still to suffer.

Even where the destruction is spoken of as future it cannot mean annihilation. For it is the thing threatened, and it is described in words that imply conscious suffering. Men are to be "punished" with it; they are to "suffer" it; they "go away" into it; they are "cast alive" into it; they "have no rest day nor night;" "their worm dieth not, their fire is not quenched." It is after God has killed that He casts into hell. This is described as the everlasting perdition with which men are visited *when Christ comes*. Most who hold ultimate annihilation hold that it is preceded by years or ages of suffering. Either these ages of suffering are "the destruction" or they are not. If they are, then clearly destruction is consistent with continued life. If they are not the destruction, but only precede it, then the destruction is not inflicted when Christ comes, as it is said to be; and the threatened destruction, which is always spoken of as punishment, is a blessing, not a curse. It is either suffering or a most welcome release! From one or other of these conclusions I see no escape.

*Surely this is the meaning of "destroying body and soul" in hell—a thing God can do. (Matt. x. 28.) In the parallel passage the phrase is simply "cast into hell." (Luke xii. 5.) The demons express the thought in three forms—"destroy," "send away into the bottomless pit," and "torment before the time." (Mark i. 24, Luke iv. 34, Matt. viii. 20, Luke viii.) The evil spirits thought that "destruction" was "torment," and though they might have got the notion—as I see it is said the Jews got their notions of a future life—from the heathen, they were right in their views. (Matt. xxv. 4.)