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## Poetry.

### I AM WAITING.

"Now, Lord, what wait I for?"—Psalm xxxix. 7.

I am waiting for the answer  
To many an earnest prayer.  
Long have I watched and waited,  
And still will linger there.  
Thine hand, it is not shortened,  
Nor heavy is thine ear.  
I know the answer's coming,  
And wait, and do not fear.

I am waiting for the moving  
Of the fiery pillar bright,  
And I dare not take one footstep  
Without its guiding light.  
Thy Providence has led me  
In all my wandering past:  
That Providence will lead me,  
E'en to the very last.

I am waiting for the triumph  
Of the right o'er sin and wrong,  
Which the "saints beneath the altar"  
Have waited for so long.  
Soon is that triumph coming,  
Soon shall the conflict cease,  
And war, and war's dark rumours,  
Shall end in lasting peace.

I am waiting till the darkness  
Shall all have cleared away.  
The night, it has been dreary;  
Bright, bright will be the day.  
"As they that watch for morning,"  
Have I waited lone and long;  
And now I see the dawning,  
And my heart breaks forth in song.

I am waiting for the coming  
Of the glorious King of Kings;  
Who, in his march of conquest,  
Both joy and "healing" brings.  
O come, then, blessed Saviour,  
Thine is the right to reign;  
Desire of all the nations,  
O come to earth again.

I am waiting for the summons  
Of the Bridegroom drawing near,  
And I stand with loins well girded,  
And watch till he appear.  
Soon, soon "these eyes shall see him"  
Soon shall I hear his voice:  
With such a blissful prospect,  
I cannot but rejoice.

I am waiting for the opening  
Of the pearly, crystal gates,  
Of Jerusalem, the golden;  
For that my spirit waits.  
I long to hear the welcome—  
"Ye blessed, enter in;  
Rest, weary ones, for ever  
From toil, and pain, and sin."  
J. OSWALD JACKSON.

## Religious.

### DOES SIN WEAR OUT?

BY G. ROGERS.

This question has been suggested by the modern advocacy of the limited duration of punishment for sin, and consequently the limited duration of its guilt. In other words, sin is supposed from its own nature to be perishable, and in time to wear itself out. On no other principle could the annihilation of the sinner take place. Soon as the period of the termination of existence arrives, sin is reduced to the lowest point in which it can exist in a conscious being; and certainly must be far less than when the term of suffering began; and consequently must have gone through a process of gradual decay. The question here is not concerning the immortality of the soul itself, but concerning the immortality of sin. If sin be beyond the decaying influence of time, so must the sinner be, for there is the same reason for its hold upon the sinner at the remotest period of existence as at first. Sin itself therefore is supposed by the limited theory of punishment to be subject to decay, and to wear itself out. But can sin wear out?

Combinations of matter wear out. All metals wear out by use. Granite rocks are worn by the action of surrounding elements. The waters wear away the stones. All material things are subject to decay. In those forms of matter in which provision is made for continual waste, as in vegetable and mere animal life, the tendency to dis-

solution ultimately prevails. Every plant and animal has its term of existence, at the close of which it yields to its own diminished powers. The human frame, even in its present state of continual waste and reproduction, could not be designed for immortality. Flesh and blood could not, at any time or under any circumstances, inherit the kingdom of heaven. An immortal body would have been the reward, alike of innocence as it now is of faith in a risen and glorified Lord. All this, however, relates to forms of matter, and not to matter itself. In the midst of incessant changes, we have no evidence that atoms themselves become less, or are subject to decay. We say not that they are indestructible, but that they are not known to be destroyed.

Vegetable life may be arrested in its progress, but would never wear itself out. It has the power of animating matter, and assimilating it to itself for the production of a certain result; but, instead of forfeiting its own life, it imparts it to other seeds of the same kind; in some thirty, some sixty, and some a hundred-fold. One grain of wheat transmits its life to numerous others, and each one of these in turn to as many more, and those to others in endless succession. Thus God gave "the herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit whose seed was in itself, after his kind." In this instance, the effect appears to be greater than the cause, inasmuch as each of the new seeds produced possesses exactly the same kind and degree of vitality as the one parent seed. If vegetable life does not of itself wear out, how much less the soul of man.

The same may be affirmed of animal life. Animals convey their own life with its peculiar instincts to others, and though they die, the life that is in them is not of necessity exhausted, but, uninjured by wear and tear, may be reproduced in an interminable series of other forms. The natural life of all such is singularly derived from the life of their first parent. The different identities here, as in plants and animals, do not affect the present enquiry, which relates simply to the tendency of life itself to wear itself out.

We enquire next: Does mind naturally wear itself out? It is in continual exercise in all men, and in some to an incalculable extent; but does it become enfeebled in itself, and diminished by the greatest use? We have every reason to suppose that in proportion to its exercise its real strength is increased. The whole symptoms of decay are from the physical organisation, through which alone in its present condition it can act. How do we know this? From the fact of its incapacity for vigorous action in certain bodily infirmities, and the restoration of its full vigour when the bodily infirmity is gone; and from the fact of frequent occurrence of a lucid interval immediately prior to dissolution, in which the whole strength of intellect has returned.

We enquire now: Is there decay in the moral world? Do moral principles wear out? Are good and evil subject to the ravages of time, or are they independent of them? Dependent upon times and circumstances they may be for their acts; but is the moral character of those acts limited to the time of their commission? Is the good or evil limited to the act, or is it not rather independent of it, of which the act is but the sign? If the moral character of the act survives the act itself, is that too subject to decline only by a more gradual process? Does time, in fact, diminish the guilt of sin? We speak of a fault committed by another some years ago as less condemnatory than if it had been of recent occurrence; not because it is less criminal in itself, but because we hope it may have been repented of and forgiven. Time has a softening influence upon men, which applies not to God. His law takes no account of time in its demands. It is not intensified by haste, nor tempered by delay. Neither is the responsibility of moral agents diminished by delay. Sin, therefore, as a moral act cannot

wear out. It cannot wear out in this life, while its judgment lingers and its damnation slumbers; neither can it wear itself out hereafter, or be consumed in its own fires. If sin wears out in its punishment, it must be either in its own nature or in the mind of God respecting it. If in its own nature, no new sins must be committed during that punishment, and the punishment itself must be expiatory of former transgressions; both of which are contrary to reason and to the Scriptures. There is no reason to suppose that punishment alters the disposition to sin against God any more than to sin against man. The same disposition to sin, as a rule, remains during its punishment. Suffering for sin does not lessen the moral tendency to sin. It has often increased it. If sin be the transgression of the law, and the whole law is included in love to God with all the heart, and to others as to ourselves, it is impossible to suppose that any other than a sinful disposition can remain in the midst of judicial suffering. The supposition that punishment is expiatory is equally untenable. No man expiates the crime morally for which he has suffered the whole penalty of the law in human society. There can be no merit in that which he was compelled to endure. The sole merit is in the law by which the penalty was enforced. Expiatory sufferings must be voluntarily endured; and to speak of merit in that which is extorted from a rebellious will, is manifestly absurd.

As sin cannot wear out in its own nature, neither can it wear out in the mind of God respecting it. So long as it continues the same, it must be looked upon by him with the same detestation, and receive from him the same tokens of his displeasure. Time with him is of no account in estimating the guilt of sin, except as its evil consequences become more apparent to others. No sin is lessened by the remotest distance of time. In this respect, one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. If the demerit of sin can wear out, why not the merit of obedience too? Both are moral principles; and they are the counterpart of each other. What then becomes of unerring angels? The merit of their obedience dies out at the same time as the demerit of those that had sinned. Limit the hold of the moral law upon the one, and you limit its hold upon the other. If sin be less punished, righteousness must be less rewarded.

Further, if sin wears out, redemption from sin must wear out too; the grace of redemption, the price of redemption, the glory of redemption, must all wear out in time; inasmuch as the value of redemption consists in the character and duration of that from which it redeems. When the period arrives at which sin would have worn itself out, redemption from sin must cease, and redemption from annihilation must be all that remains. As annihilation is less than living only to be intensely miserable, the redemption must be less, and must be decreased in its value from the very moment that it began. According to this theory, the glory of the Lamb in the midst of the throne must gradually fade away; the obligations of the redeemed to it must become less and less; their songs, instead of rising in fervour, must become less rapturous and triumphant; and redemption from sin and hell must become in the end a thing of the past. The most glorious of the Divine work in its principal effects would, in time, become completely worn out.

Have we any instance in which sin can be discovered to be wearing out, or its own nature to fail? There is one at least in which no wearing out has yet been detected. We refer to the first and consequently the oldest in the world. It was for one sin of our first parent that man was turned out of Paradise, and the whole race lost its innocence, and became subject to sin and death. We do not conclude that his other sins had this effect. All is attributed to that one sin. What now has been its effect? Has it lost any of its power? Have there been any

symptoms of its decay? Is there less of the old Adam in his infancy, and greater natural tendencies to good? Has there been any marked diminution in the effect of original sin? What! not after the wear and tear of six thousand years upon the whole race of man? Not the least perceptible difference as yet? Then, how long would it be before the least symptom of decay will appear? How long before an evident diminution would take place? How long before its influence would be entirely exhausted? If one sin brings before us such effects, undiminished by extent or time, when would the whole sins of one man be worn out, or exhibit the least symptom of decay? Yet the new theory is that sin will wear itself out. Do material atoms wear out? Does life in plants and animals wear itself out? Does mind literally wear out? Does crime against human laws ever wear out? Has the oldest sin known on the earth shown the least symptom of wearing out? Where then are the evidences that sin, in every man and in the whole creation, will in due time wear itself out? This may be beautiful in theory, but, we fear, this is all can be said on its behalf.

### THE LORD SENT HIM.

One Sabbath a poor drunken man walked into one of our wealthy and fashionable congregations, and seated himself near the pulpit. He came in at the close of the first hymn, and his shabby appearance and unsteady gait attracted general observation. The minister had scarcely commenced preaching when the stranger had sunk into a deep sleep; his loud snoring almost drowned the voice of the speaker, and one of the officers of the church approached to lead him out of the building.

"Let him remain," said the minister; "he does not disturb me. If he does you, try and bear with him. I hope he may hear some word before he leaves which will persuade him to lead a new life. The man is not in his senses; there is some influence which we do not perceive which has led him here. I believe the Lord sent him."

He continued to sleep on, but more quietly. The pealing of an organ and the singing of the choir at last aroused him. He started to his feet and gazed in bewilderment around. It was the old hymn, "Rock of Ages," which they were singing. He sat down and buried his face in his hands. What memories came thronging upon him, who shall say? That he was affected might be seen by his flowing tears. He listened to the prayer which followed,—a touching petition that all might repent and seek the Saviour, and that each one might find pardon and peace.

The next Sabbath he was again in church. This time he was a punctual and attentive listener. Although still shabbily dressed, he had paid some regard to his attire. He continued to attend, and to improve in his appearance. In one of the prayer-meetings he arose and said he hoped he had become a Christian. He had a pious mother; her great desire was that he might become a Christian. Since her death he had become a victim of intemperance. For years his course had been downward. On the Sabbath when he first entered the church, he had heard the singing and paused to listen. A voice seemed to bid him enter. He thought it might be the voice of God speaking to him for the last time. Half overcome with drink and almost in rags, he entered the church. He heard part of the hymn, "Rock of Ages," the hymn sung by his mother upon her death-bed. The prayer which followed seemed meant for him. He resolved to leave off his old habit, and by the grace of God he had kept his resolution.

He became a sincere and devoted Christian. Of that church he became a member and subsequently a deacon. "I do not know," said his pastor, "a man more earnest, or more successful in doing good than he."

### THE POWER OF WOMAN.

The subtle and mysterious attraction which everywhere draws men to women is a sacred trust committed to women by the Creator. It is not only a power irresistible, but a possession inalienable. By no misuse or disuse can it be forfeited. It is not beauty, nor wit, nor goodness; for the attraction exists independent of all these. It is simply womanhood. Man pays deference to woman instinctively, involuntarily, not because she is beautiful, or truthful, or wise, or foolish, or proper; but because she is a woman, and he cannot help it. If she descends, he will lower to her level; if she rises, he will rise to her height. This is the real danger—not that she will drive him from her, but in that she cannot drive him from her. She cannot help being his blessing or his bane. She cannot make herself into a being whom he will not love. If she is insipid, ignorant, masculine, coarse—then he will love insipidity, ignorance, masculinities, coarseness, and be himself deteriorated. So much the more ought woman, by virtue of this mysterious and inalienable power, to rise to the height of its wise and worthy exercise. Instead of making it merely the minister of her own indolence and vanity, it should be made to minister all human grace and succor. Instead of regarding it as a reason why she may dispense with all prudence and wisdom, it is the reason of all reasons why she should concentrate within herself every resource of prudence and wisdom.—Gail Hamilton.

### THE BETTERMENT OF PRAYER-MEETINGS.

The question is often asked, "How shall we render prayer-meetings more interesting?" The question has as many meanings as persons to ask it. I once heard a brother say, "What we want in this meeting is not exhortation, nor instruction; we want experience." I could not withhold the inquiry, "Do you want an experience which is not instructive?" We do not want the experience of an empty head or unfeeling heart. One says, "What we want is a good many speakers." "No," says another "we want a good many prayers, and the three minute rule enforced." Another says, "We want a good deal of singing, prompt and hearty."

No, brother no; we may want these things, but these things are not our main want. We want a full spiritual life; we want Christians attuned to continuous sympathy with God and his Word, and with man and his circumstances, and the power to connect the one with the other. Our ordinary attempts to get up a good prayer-meeting are simply endeavors to get more out of our members than there is in them. The utterances in exhortation, exposition, experience and prayer, can never much exceed the daily life.

Well, what is to be done about it! Ah! that's for you to say; and if it is to be said intelligently, we must first agree upon piety, what it is.

It is the fear of God; the love of God; the worship of God; the service of God. It is a practical fear and love; a controlling fear and love, involving conscientious and loving worship and service, with heart enough in it to make us ready for any sacrifice. Now this brings us round to the question, How shall we get such love and service out of the whole body of our church members, and especially in the prayer-meetings?

I answer, By prevailing upon them to heed the Apostle's injunction: "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This they will not heed to-day; therefore to-day you cannot, from the whole body of the church, have more interesting prayer-meetings. You must therefore begin with individuals. Every individual who can be persuaded to do this, you