Christian Union.

When Madam Roland, on her way to the guillotine, pointed to a statue which she was passing and said, "O Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name," she was teaching the world for all time to come that the popular use of a term does not necessarily indicate the true nature of that to which it is being applied, which may be, and often is, something very different from what it is called. There is reason to fear that this is the case at the present day with respect to Christian Union. The theme is a popular one. It is the ever recurring topic of speeches at the religious meetings where ministers of different denominations take part in the proceedings; and not unfrequently it is the subject of articles in the secular newspapers. When so much is being said on the subject, it cannot be amiss to try and make sure that we all know what we are talking about, and that we are not calling very different things by the same name. Of this we are certainly justified in being somewhat suspicious when we find prominent men in the most sectarian of sects, others who compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and not a few who stand aloof from all religious bodies, uniting in the advocacy of what they all call Christian union. The most definite conception that we can form of what they are recommending is that it is the obliteration of all ecclesiastical distinctions and the formation of one denomination for all Protestants, if not for all Christians. Some errors are like bomb shells that have to be broken with many hard knocks before they are made incapable of further mischief; others are like soap bubbles that vanish at a touch. The popular notion of Christian union is of the latter class. It will not endure a moment's examination. What is to be the nature of the one denomination that is to include all the different sects of Protestants? Is it to be any one of those already existing or one newly manufactured for the purpose? If the former, who is to make the selection of "the church" which is to be the mother of some and the step-mother of the rest of us? If the latter, by what authority and consent, and on what principles is the new and all comprehensive religious organization to be formed? What will be its faith and practice so that Universalists and Calvinists, Baptists and Pedobaptists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, can all honestly join it, accept its teachings and conform to its practice? No answer is needed to these questions. To ask them is sufficient proof that the popular idea of Christian union is a ridiculous impossibility.

But we object to it on more serious grounds. It demands disloyalty to conscience. Liberality though the broadest, and Christian charity though the deepest, will not change carefully formed and and firmly established convictions concerning the things which Christ taught His people to believe and do. Is the church to consist of a converted membership or is it not? Is baptism the immersion of a believer or the sprinkling of an unconscious babe? Are sacerdotalism and sacramentarianism a part of the gospel of Christ or merely Romish superstitions? Are these, and many kindred matters, things of no importance, or those about which intelligent Christians always have strong convictions, to be maintained at every sacrifice? If so, what are we to think of the Christian union whose first demand is that all such matters are to be ignored?

Another objection we have to the popular idea of Christian union is that it implies that Christianity is a nameless something, an idea, a sentiment, a moral influence to which dogma, ordinance, or church polity of any kind, is not essential. The apostle Paul did not think so when he wrote the epistle to the Galatians; nor Luther when he shook the world with justification by faith; nor Jonathan Edwards when he was driven from Northampton for insisting upon a personal experience of divine grace; nor John Wesley when he declared regeneration by the Spirit essential to eternal life; nor any one who has ever preached a gospel that was the power of God unto salvation. If Christianity was simply a superior morality, the popular idea of Christian union might take shape in a universal church without a doctrine or ordinance, and only a code of rules by which to regulate conduct. But inasmuch as it consists of doctrines divinely revealed and ordinances divinely instituted, it can never be degraded to such a mere form of godliness without the power of living faith and blessed hope.

A third objection which we have to the popular idea of Christian union is that it seems to have far more of the spirit of worldly ambition than of brotherly love. Its aim appears to be lessin the direction of extending to all the followers of Christ true Christian fellowship, exhibiting itself in the practice of justice, courtesy and kindness, than in that of promoting ecclesiastical alliances that will increase numbers, wealth and power. In their conflicts with Rome, Protestants have been made to feel their weakness caused by the sectarian divisions in social and political contests with the mighty ecclesiastical organization, which is a unit in its obedience to the Vatican; they have been like guerillas fighting against a great and united army moving as one man. Besides this, in the performance of Christian work, at home or abroad, sectarian rivalries often cause a lamentable waste of energy and means. In the village hamlet, where one church and its pastor are all that are needed for the religious wants of its people, and could be properly maintained, sectarian jealousy will often cause several churches of different denominations to be found struggling for an existence; and while in the foreign field Roman Catholic priests are mutual helps, Protestant missionaries of different denominations are not seldom mutual hindrances. And then who would not sooner belong to such a large, powerful, wealthy body as united Protestantism would create, rather than to one of the weak sects into which it is now divided? The involuntary Amen, with which many will respond to this makes confession of the ambition which inspires most of the prevailing enthusiasm for what is called Christian union; and yet there is nothing more clearly taught by the history of Christianity, or more uniformly confirmed by our own observation than the fact that in proportion as any religious body becomes rich and powerful, it loses its spirituality and working power. It is still true that Christ's kingdom is not of this world, and that not by might nor by power but by the Divine Spirit, the work of redemption must be carried on to its final triumph in this world.

Nevertheless there is a Christian union in which we believe, for which we pray, and in the signs of whose approach we rejoice. It is a Christian union which does not degrade the truth, but exalts it above all else that marks those who believe and obey it; whose aim is not worldly glory nor political power, but spiritual blessings: which does not pay great deference to those whose social status it envies or reverses, and treat with supercilious indifference or offensive patronage those who occupy a more humble position in the scale; but which loves and honors all who are worthy of the name of Christians, and extends to them heartfelt sympathy and ready cooperation; and which, while frank in its avowal and loyal in its defence of the truth, manifests its consciousness that whatever differences may divide the followers of Jesus they are all one in Him. We rejoice to believe that such Christian union as this is increasing in all denominations, for it is both an indication of the glorious consummation and an assurance of its approach. M.

The Church of the Nineteenth Century, and the Young of the Nineteenth Century.

BY HENRY FRANCIS ADAMS.

(Conclusion.)

I have observed that the movement was more largely adopted by the denomination of its founder than by any other. From the day of Henry Ward Beecher's departure from orthodoxy, which bold step gave courage to Andover's like minded divinity professors, the Congregational churches had suffered from spiritual chills, the result of the cold waves of new theology, which those two fountains of thought sent over their hearers and pupils. At the time of the birth of the Y. P. S. C. E., the Congregational churches had got as near zero in the religious thermometer as it is possible for a denomination to do that professes the evangelical faith. This new society came to their rescue; the faithful among them saw in this new method of Christian labor a great means of restoring the lost evangelical fervor that marked their church life in the "good old times." It spread so rapidly in the New England States that, I suppose, there is not a Congregational church in them that has not a Y. P. S. C. E. And the movement has done more for them spiritually than any movement that has been set on foot in the present century; for it has added thousands of young people to their church rolls, so as to entirely change the religious character of their church life and meetings.

The Methodists, with that shrewdness and far sightedness which account much for their fast growth, felt that to take hold of a movement that was not wholly within their control, would be unmethodistic and unwise. So instead of joining hands with the Congregationalists, they inaugurated "The Epworth League," a society on much the same basis and with the same objects in view. This was at once taken hold of by the Methodist churches throughout the States, and supplied to them the "missing link" in church work, as the Endeavor Society did for the Congregationalists.

After the Congregational churches, the Presbyterians have most numerously adopted this Endeavor Society to fill up the "missing link," though many of their churches in the United States have not done so. But the Baptists have very generally, both in the States and in these Provinces, declined to take kindly to the society, I presume for the reason that Baptists' past experience of so-called *undenominational societies and union movements* has not been satisfactory.

The work accomplished by the Y. P. S. C. E. has, however, had a very good educating effect on the Baptists of the United States, and they are now formulating a society to be called "The Young People's Baptist Union." It seems late in this day of progress, but then the Baptists move slowly in all their denominational movements. Is it not time that the Baptist body in these provinces opened their eyes, not to the faults only, but also to the great and growing work of the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor? As we have not a branch of church work that really supplies the "missing link" between the Sabbath school and the church, are we true to the trust committed to us in longer allowing this great want to remain unsupplied? Can we, nay dare we, see the young people of our families drift away from us into the world and into other denominations, because we have no branch of church work that invites them to give their youth to the consideration of the greatest concerns of time and eternity.

If the same time and thought that have been expended in holding up the faults of the Y. P. S. C. E. had been given to the formation of a branch of church work fitted to reach and hold the young, the Maritime Baptist denomination would to-day have in all its churches a society that would embrace from ten to fifteen thousand young men and women, and through our young Christians, many would be brought under religious influences who to-day are exercising a worldly influence on our young Christians. Young people must meet together, they will meet together; and if the church does not furnish a place, a subject, and an object that will command their attention, the world will and does. Our past policy has been to let our young people go from the Sabbath-school into the world for several years, and when they have got wedded to its godless habits and giddy ways, we make a desperate effort to win them to Christ. Is it necessary that they should taste of the bitters of sin, in order to appreciate the sweet waters of the gospel? Then, when we have won them to Christ, many of them lapse into a semi-worldliness; because they do not find a congenial place in the church home, where their talents and time could be utilized for Christ and humanity. True, many pastors have held young people's prayer meetings, in the hope of supplying the "missing link," but these have lacked that organic element which has made the Y. P. S. C. E. such a powerful instrument in attracting the unconverted, and developing the converted. And as our young people's prayer meetings are not organized by the church, but only a sort of appendix which necessity has attached to general work; they are maintained or given up just as the pastor may think fit. If a pastor has a love for young people, and possesses the tact and attractiveness that will draw them to himself, they may attend a prayer meeting, but if he does not, the young people's prayer meeting possibly may not be held, or, what is more probable, it will be a comparative failure.

Surely it is time we looked this great problem fully in the face, and studied how we can best solve it. Do our older brethren and sisters answer my advocacy for this "missing link" to be supplied by our denomination, by saying, "When we were young we were satisfied with the Sabbath services and the weekly prayer meeting, and why cannot the youth of to-day be content therewith?" The youth of to-day are content therewith, but the majority of the young exhibit their satisfaction with the present methods of our work by staying away from them as much as they can. And I believe I may say without fear of contradiction, that the older Christians of to day would have been stronger spiritually, more fully developed mentally, and more able workers in the vineyard of Christ, if this missing link had been supplied when they were young.

The world, the flesh, and the devil, that powerful syndicate of great resources, never were so vigilant and energetic in their endeavors to provide attractions for the young at the age I have referred to, than they are to-day. The young people of this day cannot be compared to the young people of fifty years ago, nor can their means of seeing the world, nor can their temptations to evil. They are surrounded by environments that make for unrighteousness. In the private home and in the public resorts, the evil one is trying to oppose Christ, the world is vigorously competing with the church, and the native carnality in man is trying to prove to the young that a round dance, a game with ace cards, a glass of wine, a visit to the theatre, are the proper and most enjoyable recreations in which they can engage. Among many professing Christians there has been going on during the last few years a trimming process, efforts to show that a member of a church can serve God and Mammon, Christ and Bacchus. They have succeeded in inducing young professors to forego their allegiance to Christ, to violate their covenant with the church, and to pain beyond expression the hearts of the pastors who received them into the churches. Why this relapse into a worse condition than before they professed conversion? In most cases, it was not because of the efforts of the enemy, but because the church to which they belonged had no specially adapted place and occupation for them in the church, and therefore they lacked the strength and courage in the hour of temptation.

Brethren and sisters of the Baptist churches of these provinces, can we afford to fold our arms any longer, and calmly see our young people drawn away into an ungodly world, their good moral characters corrupted by contact with evil, their early love for God's house supplanted by a taste for Satan's temples, and all our hopes concerning their future blasted, without a vigorous, earnest, and self-denying effort to supply a permanent and effective counteractive to the work of the evil one? Should we not put our hearts and heads together, in order to devise a form of Christian labor that will supply the "missing link" in all our churches? That just as we have attached to each church a Sabbath-school, for initiating the young in the knowledge of God's word, so might and should each church make it as special to have a method of work that the young could feel they had some tie to the house of God on other days as well as the Sabbath. And why should not this branch of church work be represented in our associational and convention meetings? Let it be discussed and changes suggested; and so become an integral part of our great and growing work as a body. What brighter and more joyous time could be imagined in our often dull and prosy associational and conventional gatherings than a half or whole day devoted to the consideration and discussion of such a work among our young as I have suggested? If we are convinced that our past policy towards the young has been marked by omissions at one very important point, let us at once try to repair that weak part. Where shall we begin? What shall be the plan of our endeavor? Who shall lead the way? Who is sufficient for these things? Are there no sources whence we can get ideas? Can we not learn some things from the past of the Y. P. S. C. E.? Suppose we call such a branch of church work

"THE BAPTIST MISSING LINK."

We have the "Baptist church," "the Baptist Sabbath school," now let us complete the trio by "The Baptist Missing Link." It is easy to get a title, and by no means a difficult task to formulate good, safe and practicable rules. But in attempting to launch this new denominational enterprise, we are conscious that the most dangerous and difficult part of the Baptist coast to pass is, that from which juts out a rugged rock on which are written the words,

"ARE YOU GOVERNED BY THE CHURCH?"

Is it not possible to have a young people's society organized by the church, responsible to the church, and in a measure supported by the church, in the same way and spirit that the Sabbath-school is? I do not see why it cannot be. One point is absolutely certain, that is, that we cannot have this work accomplished without some *form* being given to it. We cannot have a Sabbath-school without rules and officers, and this "missing link" cannot be supplied without some organic *form*, that shall involve the setting afloat of a few rules and some officers. If we have had the great society of the Sabbath-school so long in existence, under the wing of the church and yet possessing a separate life, why can we not also have a "missing link," that shall in the same way be under the wing of the mother church; yet, like a child, having a distinct life and individuality all its own? Not letting such a society be formed and abandoned according to the whims or wishes of a pastor, but making its existence a positive and permanent part of the church's work, just as it does the Sabbath-school. If a man sets his heart on objecting to such a society because it cannot be perfect, he can occupy himself in the same way regarding every Baptist church and Sabbath-school in the provinces. But if an intense desire to furnish a remedy for a weakness in our church machinery that is acknowledged on every hand, be at the base of all thought and endeavors toward that end, enough is at hand to at once make the experiment in every church in the land. But let us work in harmony. Let us all try the same method, put into operation a well thought out and fully matured set of rules; making all its parts and appointments so simple, attractive, practicable, and assuredly so Baptistic that every church in our convention will be tempted to fall into line and adopt the "missing link," and no one will see a point to object to.

The Scripture Doctrine of Eternal Punishment.

BY PRESIDENT AUGUSTUS H. STRONG, D. D.

King James's Version of Mark 3: 28, 29 reads thus: "Verily, I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation." The best manuscripts of the New Testament, however, have the word "sin," in place of the word here rendered "damnation," and the Revised Version accordingly reads as follows: "Whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." We have here, in the very words of Scripture, the essence of the doctrine of future punishment. It is plainly taught that there are some who shall never be forgiven, because they are guilty of an eternal sin. A careful consideration of this passage, and of the relation it suggests between punishment and sin, will clear the subject of many of its difficulties and will show the doctrine founded upon it to be entirely reasonable.

PHYSICAL SUFFERING NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE DOCTRINE.

Many of the current objections to the doctrine of essential retribution are based upon a misconception of the doctrine itself. It is often assumed that the material images which the Scriptures employ to describe the state of the wicked after death are to be interpreted literally. Now it is not probable that even Jonathan Edwards, who used so often the images of brimstone and fire, regarded these as anything more than vivid symbols of the spiritual inflictions under which the lost are to suffer. He used them because he found the Scriptures using them, and he thought it most safe and most true to follow Scripture. But as there is no evidence that he thought heaven to be essentially a city of golden streets and pearly gates, so there is no evidence that he regarded hell to be essentially a place of outward and physical torment. What he meant was that these images helped men to realize the dreadfulness of future suffering, not that they were literal descriptions of the place and kind of that suffering.

But whatever may have been the belief of Jonathan Edwards, the words in Mark turn our thoughts from the outward circumstances to the inward state. It is of comparatively little importance what the opinions of even good men have been, or what the standards of great Christian bodies have been, if we can only attain to a clear understanding of what the Bible teaches. And in this passage, in which the consequences of the greatest sin of all are declared, we have no mention of bodily torment, but only of spiritual results. He who sins against the Holy Ghost is guilty of an eternal sin, a sin that never ceases; and so, he has never forgiveness; that is, he abides under the anger of God forever.

POSITIVE INFLICTIONS NOT ESSENTIAL TO THE DOCTRINE.

Another misconception of the doctrine we are considering may be removed by a scrutiny of this same passage. It is often assumed that the punishments which the wicked undergo in the next world are positive and direct inflictions of God. Now it is not necessary to our present discussion either to affirm or to deny the existence of positive punishments. There are some Scripture passages which seem to assert them; as where Christ bids us fear Him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. But what we are now concerned to maintain is this, that positive inflictions are not essential to the doctrine of retribution. There are laws of our mental and moral being that react against sin and work its punishments, whether God lifts His hand in special judgment or not.

Just as a violation of physical laws brings about its results of pain and suffering, without the appointment of any special judge or executioner, so the violation of moral and spiritual laws brings in its train an equally certain retribution. God does not need to set up a gallows or a whipping-post in the universe in order to secure the punishment of sin. In every man's soul there may be a hell of disorder and remorse and anguish, even though the only minister of justice may be the indignant conscience within.

The old Universalism that landed the dying debauchee on the heavenly shore as quickly and safely as the dying saint, is all outgrown. The idea of law is too deeply inwrought into the consciousness of our time to permit the notion of salvation without change of character. The unholy soul must be miserable,—that is the one truth which serves as the key to this whole question. And this inward law of being, which determines destiny according to character, is the law which is intimated in Jesus' words. There are those who have never forgiveness, because they are guilty of an eternal sin; that is, because they are confirmed in their sin and will not forsake it.

With these preliminary explanations, we may proceed at once to three separate statements, which contain in them the essence of the Scripture doctrine of eternal punishment. They are the following: First, there are some men who, throughout eternity, will not cease to sin against God. Secondly, this eternal sinning against God will involve eternal misery. Thirdly, this misery will be the appointed vindication of God's law, and so will be an eternal punishment.

I. SOME WILL NEVER CEASE TO SIN.

Let us take the first point and consider it. There are some men who throughout eternity will not cease to sin against God. In order to make more plain the significance of this statement, we may translate it into other language. Since the great command of the law is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," and the refusal to love God is the one great sin, the proposition may run: There are men who throughout eternity will not love God. Their sin will be a voluntary declination to trust or obey their Creator, a voluntary withholding from Him of the affection of their hearts, a voluntary withdrawal of themselves from the influx of His light and love.

Judging of the matter upon purely *a priori* grounds, it might seem impossible for moral creatures thus to decide against God. It might seem impossible for God to permit sin or to inflict punishment. But facts show us that men do sin, and that God has permitted them to sin, while at the same time he punishes their sin, at least in this world. The only explanation of the problem lies in man's freedom. He has a will, which he may set supremely on good or evil, self or God, and then, as a responsible being, he must stand the consequences of his choice. We see what the results of this scheme have been. Men have turned away from God. They dislike His presence and His law. And this dislike becomes confirmed and fixed, until no arguments or influences which can be brought to bear upon them will ever change it into love. This was the condition of those to whom the Saviour uttered the words in Mark's gospel; or if it was not already their actual condition, they were in danger of falling into it. They had set themselves against God, and their sin was in danger of becoming an eternal sin, a sin into which they had so put their heart and will, that there would be no disposition to retrace their steps, and so their opposition to truth and righteousness and love would be everlasting.

MAN'S FREEDOM MAKES POSSIBLE AN ETERNAL SINNING.

The advocates of universal salvation are usually advocates of an unrestricted and absolute freedom of the human will. Many of them declare that man can choose good or evil, at any moment, whatever may be his surroundings, or whatever may be his previous character. He has power, they say, at any moment to choose holiness and God. He has equal power, in spite of all motives to a contrary course, to choose sin and satan. And yet these advocates of unlimited freedom deny the possibility of the will's permanently choosing evil. They are very inconsistent with themselves. They strenuously maintain the inalienable freedom of the human will to make choices contrary to all the motives which are brought or can be brought to bear upon it. They grant that, as a matter of fact, we find, in this world, men choosing sin in spite of infinite motive to the contrary. Upon their own theory of human freedom, no motives which God can use will certainly accomplish the salvation of all moral creatures. The soul which resists Christ here may resist Him forever. We have no right to say that all will certainly be saved, for there is no limit to man's possible perversity and madness. Only God Himself can tell us whether all will accept salvation, and God tells us in this passage of His Word which we are considering that there is a sin which hath never forgiveness, but which is so persisted in as to be eternal.

But if the salvation of all is problematical upon the theory of freedom, which has been mentioned, it is far more so upon the truer view that man's volitions, unless special divine influences are granted him, simply express his previous character. Though not necessarily, yet with infallible certainty, this evil tree will bring forth evil fruit. The man acts out what is in him. He has been adding to the strength of his selfishness by the acts of a lifetime. There is a certainty that, unless renewed and transformed by the Divine Spirit, he will act selfishly still. And all this is as true of the next life as it is of this. Death is no saviour. Death does not change character. The filthy will be filthy still, while the righteous will be righteous still.

INCREASE OF KNOWLEDGE WILL NOT REFORM THE SINNER.

Radically new views of Christ and of the truth will never be possible, so long as the man continues to hate Christ and the truth. When we hate a thing, to bring us into close contact with it is to increase our hatred. So the light of eternity is not of itself sufficient to change dislike to God into love. Bring the sinner into contact with the intense whiteness of the divine purity and he flies from it in dread. It convicts and condemns him. Since the carnal mind is enmity to God, death, that lifts the veil between God and the sinner, must only intensify the sinner's hatred, and so confirm his evil character that change is forever after impossible.

It sometimes said that the sufferings of the next world may be the means of changing the character. But suffering has in itself no reforming power. Unless accompanied by special renewing influences of the Holy Spirit it only hardens and embitters the soul. A man never needs so much the grace of God as when he is in affliction, for if that grace is not sought and used, his affliction may only petrify his moral and spiritual nature. A lifetime of pain did not make Blanco White a believer, and ages of pain will have not even a tendency to turn an enemy of God into a friend. The only agent who can accomplish the work of renewing the human heart and will, is the mighty Spirit of God. Is that Spirit given after death to sanctify the sufferings of those who leave this world rejectors of God and of his salvation? Only God can tell us. And in all the Bible there is no positive intimation, even, that such influences of the Spirit are exerted after death upon the still impenitent, while there is much evidence that the moral condition in which death finds men is their condition forever.

THERE IS A SIN UNTO DEATH.

The Scripture speaks unmistakably of "an eternal sin," a sin which neither the reserved powers of the human will, nor the penal sufferings of the world to come, will ever change to purity. It is a sin against the Holy Ghost, the final grieving away of the only agent who can enlighten and renew the heart. It is the radical and final setting of self against God, so that no power which God can consistently use will ever suffice to save it. It hath no forgiveness, simply because the soul that commits it has ceased to be receptive of divine influences, even when those influences are exerted in the utmost strength which God has seen fit to employ in His spiritual administration.

There is a sin unto death. What God might do we do not know. He has told us what He will do. That He could not change these obstinate wills we cannot say. He has told us that some of them He will not change. He has all power; but He uses His power in wisdom. There are limits to the exertion of His power in the case of sinners. There are persistent and wilful rejectors of Christ's salvation whom He will cast off forever. The passage we have so often quoted settles the meaning of the words "eternal" and "everlasting," as applied to the conditoin of the lost. The "eternal sin" is explained to be a sin that "hath never forgiveness." Not for a long time, but forever, does the sin endure; and with the sin, the anger of God against it. As the theory that the human will is unlimited in its freedom forbids its advocates to deny the possibility of such an eternal sin; so the Scripture view that God only can change the evil will urges men to apply to Him while He offers His help, because after His appointed time has passed there will be no renewal and no forgiveness.—*Examiner.*

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