

Christian Messenger.

A RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL FAMILY NEWSPAPER.

"Not slothful in business : fervent in spirit."

NEW SERIES.
Vol. XV. No. 46.

Halifax, Nova Scotia, Wednesday, November 16, 1870.

WHOLE SERIES
Vol. XXXIV. No. 46.

Poetry.

For the Christian Messenger.

NOT I, BUT CHRIST.

Who was the author of my birth,
The guardian of my youthful years?
In gladness who enriched my mirth?
In grief who wiped away my tears?
Not I, but Christ.

Who first unsealed my sleeping eyes
To see my guilt, and need of grace?
Who bade my sinful soul arise
And seek an injured Father's face?
Not I, but Christ.

He on the cross, my Surety, died,
By Him the claims of God were met:
With Jesus I am crucified,
Nevertheless I live, and yet
Not I, but Christ.

Bought with the blood of God's dear Son,
Who gave Himself in love for me:
Saved, not by works which I had done,
What henceforth must my motto be?
Not I, but Christ.

And while my life and labours last,
Whom shall I laud in grateful lays?
And when my life on earth is past,
Who shall receive the crown of praise?
Not I, but Christ.

St. John, N. B.

TIMOTHY HARLEY.

Religious.

THE FUTURE STATE OF THE WICKED.

LETTER II.

NOTES: METHODS, CANONS, SYSTEMS OF THEOLOGY
—DESTRUCTION—PUNISHMENT AND CHASTISE-
MENT—EVERLASTING—ETERNAL LIFE, DEATH—
GHEHENNA—THE WRATH OF GOD—THE IM-
MORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

(Concluded.)

IV. "EVERLASTING," "FOR EVER AND EVER."—I have heard men say, "Everlasting, oh, it may mean anything. It is used in Scripture of the hills and of covenants that have long since ended. Some hold that it means 'age-lasting,' and translate it 'timestate.' Others think that it means, 'spiritual.' We cannot put dependence upon that word." But the word has a definite meaning notwithstanding. Happily its meaning is in old Greek clear enough. Aristotle, the tutor of Alexander the Great, has explained it at length. In describing the highest heaven as the residence of the gods he says that as to the things there time never makes them grow old; neither is there any change of any of them. They are unchangeable and passionless, and having the best, even the self-sufficient life, they continue through all (*aion*) eternity. For the word itself, according to the ancients, divinely expressed this. For the period which comprehends the time of every one's life, beyond which, according to nature, nothing exists, is called his *aion* (eternity). And for the same reason also the period of the whole heaven, even the infinite time of all things, and the period comprehending that infinity is *aion* (eternity), deriving its name from (*aei einai*) always being, immortal and Divine. Whence also it is applied to other things, to some indeed accurately, but to others in the lax signification of being and of living. (De Caelo. Lib. I. c. 9.)

And this word is the one which is used by the Alexandrian translators of the Septuagint to render *olam*, an expression to which Gesenius assigns as its proper and primary meaning the sense of (*ewigkeit*) eternity. Indeed, he gives no other meaning, only remarking that with the Hebrews, as with us, it was used somewhat loosely. It is in short, our English word "for aye," and is used in the same way.

Such is the common meaning of the word. As to Bible usage, it is seldom found in the Old Testament, except in the proper sense; and in the New, when applied to future time, it is found in that sense alone unless we regard its application to the wicked as an exception. We never find the word used figuratively of the hills

or of the sea. It occurs in the New Testament in one of its forms, and as applied to future time, about 130 times; of these in 118 passages it is applied to God or Christ, their honors and blessedness, or to Christians, and the everlasting life they gain; 12 times it is applied to the punishment of the wicked. Restricted usage of the phrase itself there is none. Everlastingness of blessedness and of misery is described in the New Testament only by this word, and the word is never used there in a future sense of anything besides. There is in it none of the uncertainty for which some men plead.

If any wish to ascertain whether it mean "spiritual" they will find ample negative evidence in a little treatise of Moses Stuart's, published in 1829.

V. ETERNAL LIFE—DEATH.—The meaning of these words is given in the first Letter. Each begins on earth, and is perfected after the judgment. But as these words enter largely into the controversy, it may be worth while to examine them at more length. Is "eternal life" mere existence, so that he who is without it is not? And is death the opposite state—non-existence? That is practically the point in dispute.

The idea of life pervades the New Testament. It is found again and again in our Lord's teaching and in the epistles. In the Gospel of John life, *real* life, eternal life, is represented as beginning in a new birth, wherein by believing in the name of Christ men become sons of God [Jno. i. 12]. Prior to this change men are in death [Jno. v. 24]; after it their everlasting life is begun. The same truth appears and reappears. Till we eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of man—i. e., as our Lord Himself explains these words, till we believe, till by His word and Spirit we have union with Him, we have no life in us [Jno. vi. 53, 47, 68]. Till then we are dead; after we believe we live. John himself repeats the truth by telling us in his gospel that if we believe not the wrath of God abideth on us; or, as he explains it in his epistle, "We know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren, while if a man love not his brother he abideth in death" [1 Jno. iii. 14].

The truth comes out in the writings of Paul with additional clearness. Sinners are there represented as by nature dead unto God, as dead unto righteousness as dead through sins. Christians, on the other hand, are said to be alive unto God, as alive unto righteousness, as no longer dead through sins, though they are dead to the claims of the law, but as made alive in Christ, and as risen from the dead with Christ. They are, therefore, exhorted to be holy as being alive from the dead, and to make dead their members that are upon the earth. This teaching pervades the epistles [Rom. vii. 11, 2, 4, viii. 10, Eph. ii. 4—6, Col. ii. 13, iii. 1—4, 10, Gal. ii. 19—21, vi. 15, 2 Cor. v. 17, 1 Pet. ii. 5], and is set forth in various imagery.

Side by side with these statements are others in which death is spoken of in its literal sense. Our Lord spoke of the death He was to accomplish at Jerusalem; and Paul was ever being given up to death for Jesus's sake (2 Cor. iv. 11). The question may arise, Is the death of the wicked literal? Do they cease to be? and the answer is plain. The literal sense cannot be the true one, for Christians are said to have passed out of death, and yet they die; while sinners are said to be dead and to abide in death, and yet they are living; to say nothing of the fact that descriptions of that death when completed in the other world all speak of suffering and anguish that forbid the idea of annihilation. We conclude, therefore, that the life and death of which our Lord and His apostles so constantly speak are not literal, but "spiritual." The life belongs to men who were living before they received it, and who are still to die. And the death describes the present state of men who are now alive. Men may object to the term "spiritual" as applied to death, but it is as intelligible as the Apostle's phrase, "Ye as living stones are built up a spiritual house." And the thing itself is clearly Scriptural.

How life and death came to be thus used it is not difficult to ascertain. Whenever men go beyond the objects of their senses and of their consciousness or reflection, they are obliged to employ words which have originated in one or other of these sources, and to use them in a qualified sense. Everything we say of God, of Heaven, and of Hell is described in such words. Life, moreover, is of all things most dear; and death is, as Aristotle describes it, "of all fearful things the most fearful." Both words moreover, naturally describe states in relation to acquittal or condemnation, to feeling, consciousness, activity, enjoyment. This figurative usage is quite common in the Old Testament, and was familiar to the Jews in the days of our Lord.

But still further light may be thrown on these terms. All words are best known through their opposites, and it may help the student to understand the doctrine of Scripture if I give a list of the Scripture opposites of *eternal life*, the antithetic phrases as they are called:—

Shame and everlasting contempt. Dan. xii. 2.
Eternal punishment (or chastisement.) Matt. xxv. 46.
Perishing. John iii. 15, 16, x. 28.
Abiding under God's wrath. John iii. 36.
Coming into condemnation (*krisis*). John v. 24.
Indignation (*thumos*) and wrath (*orge*) tribulation and anguish. Rom. ii. 7, 8, 9.
Death. Rom. vi. 21—23.
Destruction or corruption (*phthora*). Gal. vi. 8.

Life, in the sense of eternal life, has the following opposites:—

Perdition or destruction. Matt. vii. 13, 14.
Being cast into hell (*Ghehenna*) fire. Matt. xviii. 9, Mark ix. 43—45.
Condemnation (*krisis*). John v. 29.
Death, in the comprehensive sense in which it is applied to men while alive on earth.

Rom. vii. 10, viii. 6, 1 John iii. 14.
"Eternal death" it will be noted, is a phrase not found in Scripture. The common opposite of "eternal life" is simply "condemnation and wrath."

Though "eternal death" is not a Scriptural phrase, "the second death" is. And "this awful second death" is what men have to fear. It is in fact the punishment that awaits the ungodly. What is this, it is said, but annihilation?

The phrase is found only in Revelation. The opposite is either the first death, or the death in sin in which bad men are found: "Be thou faithful unto death, and the second death shall do thee no injury" (Rev. ii. 11). "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection, over such the second death hath no power" [or claim] (Rev. xx. 6).

"The dead shall stand before God"—body and soul—"and shall be judged according to their works."

"The cowardly and unbelieving, &c., have their part in the lake of fire. This is the second death" (Rev. xx. 14, xxi. 8). These are all the passages.

The argument is that, as in the first death the body dies and ceases to exist, so in the second death the soul dies and ceases to exist. The first destroyed man physically, and the second will destroy him in his spiritual essence. There will be as complete an end of the whole man in the second death as there was of part of him in the first.

But the answer to this reasoning is plain.

(1.) The first death annihilated nothing. It only severed for a time the union of body and soul. The souls of dead men still live. The dead themselves are to be raised; and "body and soul" they are to be judged according to their works; or, if we take the other view, that the first death is the present state of bad men, that death clearly is no annihilation—nor is the second.

(2.) If the second death is cessation of all life, and that is the punishment that awaits the ungodly, then are there no degrees of punishment; and if the punish-

ment precedes the death, the death is no "awful thing," but a blessed relief.

(3.) Scripture itself moreover has defined the second death, and has excluded the meaning for which this reasoning pleads. "It is the second death" to be cast into "the lake of fire," and there it is expressly said are those "who worship the beast and his image, and who receive the mark of his name." "And they have no rest day nor night, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever." (Rev. xiv. 11.)

It may be said that this is a figurative description, and is taken from a book of symbols. Part of it therefore must be regarded as figurative. Be it so. How can the figures mean cessation of life or of consciousness? And is it forgotten that it is only in this symbolical book that the phrase "the second death" is found?

VI. GHEHENNA.—There are two words in our English Testament which are translated hell. One (*Hades*) means properly the unseen state, and is once translated the grave (1 Cor. xv. 55), as it generally is in the Old Testament. It is the word used in Matt. xi. 23, xvi. 18, Luke x. 15, xvi. 23, Acts ii. 27, 31, Rev. i. 18, vi. 8, xx. 13, 14. It will be noted that "the death and hell" cast into the lake of fire are simply Death and Hades. The passage gives no reason to believe, as some have taught, that there is an end of hell itself.

The other word (*Ghehenna*) occurs eleven times in the Gospels, and once in James (iii. 6). It means as a word [the fire of] the Valley of Hinnom, or more fully, "of the Valley of the son of Hinnom." The name belonged originally and literally to a valley that lay outside of Jerusalem to the south, and was infamous for the human sacrifices there offered to Moloch. Josiah defiled the place, and according to a common view, it became a receptacle for all the filth of the city. There the worms revelled, and there a fire was kept constantly burning. Hence it came to be an emblem of hell. Whether this view is quite accurate may be questioned. Vitranga holds that "Tophet" was known to the Jews long before; and that it was not the Valley of Hinnom that gave rise to the use of the name for hell, but the notion of hell that suggested Tophet as a fitting name for Ghehenna. And certainly Isa. xxx. 33 is in favor of this view. However this be the Jewish commentators nearly all regard the language of Isaiah (lxvi. 24) as a description of the place of future punishment. It is not, in their judgment, a description of the visit of literal worshippers (see verse 23) who come up to Jerusalem and look upon literal "carcasses of men who have transgressed," but a description of their punishment in the next life. The worm and the fire being symbols exist together, not as instruments of annihilation, but of pain. Such were the common notions of the Jews when our Lord appeared. They held also, most of them, the immortality of the soul, both of the good and of the bad; and it was among a people holding these notions that He used their familiar phrase—the fire of hell, and spoke of the wicked as cast into it—not once in His teaching, but several times.

I have laid no stress on Jewish opinions, nor have I quoted from the Old Testament; but when it is said that modern notions of punishment were unknown when our Lord appeared, and that we must interpret His words as those interpreted them who had no knowledge of a future life, and thought only of a local Ghehenna, I say simply that the reasoning is not true either in its principle or in its facts. Even if the Jews did attach an earthly local meaning to our Lord's words, as they did, for example, to all He told them of His "kingdom," it does not follow that there is no deeper, truer meaning than theirs. Tophet may "still be ordained of old," though they thought only of the place that Josiah polluted. But, in fact they understood His words as well, and in senses as profound and awful, as ourselves.*

*Any who wish to see the passages from Josephus and from Jewish writers on these subjects may find them in a convenient form in the "Bibliotheca Sacra," vol. p. 636.