

than primitive man. It has been the product of the ripest culture. Is it not reasonable to conclude that the final seed dictated the original sowing and to say with scientific reverence, "That which is last has also been first" !

G. MATHESON.

THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

IV.

IMMORTALITY IN MODERN THEOLOGY.

IN earlier papers I have proved that the phrase *the soul immortal* and the doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls are altogether alien to the phrase and thought of the Bible ; and that they crept into the Christian Church in the latter part of the second century, under the influence of Plato. We shall now consider how this subject has been treated by representative modern theologians. In this paper I shall reproduce the teaching of certain writers who accept, or do not definitely and conspicuously reject, the immortality of the soul.

My first reference shall be to an excellent work well known in all Protestant Churches and nations, the *Christian Dogmatics* of Dr. Van Oosterzee.

In §§ 66-71 the writer discusses "Man's original nature." But he nowhere asserts the endless permanence of the soul. On the contrary, he says in § 68. 4, "Of the *soul* we know too little to find, by an appeal to its constitution, sufficient ground for our demonstration ; we cannot even represent to ourselves this soul, or its independent continuance separated from the bodily life ; and the uncertain can hardly be proved by the unknown. Throughout § 68 he speaks of "the hope of immortality" and of "the immortality of man." This last phrase he defines to mean "not merely the continuance of life, but also of the sense

of life." Dr. Oosterzee asserts clearly that the soul of man is designed by God for immortal life, and that retribution beyond the grave awaits all men, good and bad. But he does not attempt to prove that all human souls will exist and think and feel for ever.

In § 69 the writer discusses the image of God in man ; and asserts that it was not destroyed, though sadly marred, by sin. He says in article 7 : " While we must regard this image as natural and capable of propagation, we must deny that it is, as something accidental, even in the least degree capable of being lost. It was not merely an ideal after which man was to strive, but actually a treasure which he was to keep, and hand over to posterity unimpaired. ' The image of God in man cannot be destroyed. Even in hell it can burn, but cannot be consumed : it may be tormented, but cannot be extirpated ' (Bernard of Clairvaux). Certainly, for it forms an original element of our human nature ; and if we were wholly despoiled of it, we should then be as little men as the bird when deprived of the means of flying can bear the name of bird." This comparison leaves open the question whether the soul may ever cease to exist : for indisputably a bird may both lose its wings and by dissipation into inorganic matter cease to be in any sense a bird. Moreover, a treasure which we are bound " to keep and to hand over to posterity unimpaired " may nevertheless be lost. Yet Dr. Oosterzee seems to believe in the endless permanence of all human souls. But this is not plainly stated : and no attempt is made to prove it.

In § 79. 12 our author discusses the duration of the future punishment of sin. He writes : " At any rate the possibility of an endless misery is most distinctly declared in Matthew xii. 31, 32 ; and words such as those in Luke xvi. 26, Matthew xxvi. 24, xxv. 10, 41 could hardly be vindicated from the charge of exaggeration if He who spoke

them had Himself even seen a ray of light in the outer darkness." This language suggests strongly the endless suffering of the lost. But Dr. Oosterzee says nothing here about the possibility of their ultimate extinction, or of the passages which speak of them as being burnt up like chaff or weeds.

In § 149 the theory of the final restoration of all men is discussed; and we have a few words about annihilation. In article 2 we read: "Annihilation of the incurably evil would, we readily confess, appear most acceptable to us, if we should give to our thoughts the highest authority in this province. For it is very difficult to conceive of an endless existence in connection with one who is entirely separated from God, the source of life, on which account accordingly Scripture has described this condition as the second death." But this theory, if I rightly understand him, Dr. Oosterzee rejects as disproved by Revelation vi. 16, xiv. 11.

On the whole, the important doctrine of the immortality of the soul, *i.e.* the essential permanence of all human souls, though apparently assumed, is no part of the definite teaching of this volume; and the writer does nothing whatever in any way to prove it.

We now come to a work marked by deep and loving insight into the things of God and by great beauty of diction, Dr. Pope's *Compendium of Theology*. In vol. i. p. 423 we read, in reference to "the image of God in man," that "it was Essential and Indestructible: the self-conscious and self-determining personality of man, as a spirit bearing the stamp of likeness to God and capable of immortality, was the reflection in the creature of the Divine nature. . . . From beginning to end the holy record regards this image as uneffaced and ineffaceable, and still existing in every human being." This language is further explained on p. 426: "No clearer evidence of the indestructibility of the Divine likeness could be given than that of the sanction

thrown around human life; it is inviolate, *for in the image of God made He man*. Of course this does not decide the question whether or not immortality was part of the indestructible image, though it might seem that we affirm it by using the term indestructible." On this last important question the writer says nothing whatever. He seems to be unwilling to state his own opinion.

Dr. Pope returns to the immortality of the soul in vol. iii. p. 372. He says, "The immortality or continued conscious existence of man's spirit is everywhere assumed in Scripture and nowhere proved." That the spirit will survive the body is assumed or stated throughout the New Testament in terms as decisive as the clearest categorical assertion; *e.g.* in 2 Corinthians v. 10, where Paul asserts that we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ in order that each may receive according to his conduct on earth; similarly John v. 28, 29, Heb. ix. 27, etc. But this is very different from assuming the endless existence of all human souls. Our author says that the immortality of man's spirit is in Scripture nowhere proved. Is the divinity of Christ proved there? It is: for in the New Testament we find decisive documentary evidence that Christ on earth claimed a superiority to men and a unique and close relation to God involving, in contrast to all mere creatures, a share of the Divine nature. But throughout the Bible we have no such proof, direct or indirect, or any clear suggestion, of the endless permanence of all human spirits. Dr. Pope adds: "The absolute immortality of the human spirit is not in question as yet." And it does not come into question throughout his work.

On p. 403, after a quotation of John v. 24-29, the writer adds: "The fuller revelation of immortality and eternal life includes, therefore, the foreannouncement of a resurrection of the whole man, and of the whole race of man, to an endless existence." But of this last all-impor-

tant statement no shadow of proof is given. On p. 421 we read of "the misery of the conscious eternal exclusion from" the vision of God; and that whatever the word eternal in Matthew xxv. 46 "means to the righteous it means also to the wicked."

On pp. 435-444 Dr. Pope discusses the theory of the annihilation of the wicked. He says: "1. The question of man's natural immortality is not allowed to be absolutely decisive; and perhaps more has been made to depend on this in the controversy than it will bear. Those who maintain that in the image of God, impressed upon man, there was a reflection in the creature of His eternity, and that this natural image was not destroyed by the Fall, are in possession of an argument which settles the matter at once. This is undoubtedly the view of Scripture, which nowhere asserts or proves the deathlessness of the human spirit any more than it asserts or proves the being of God. To us, therefore, the question is determined at the outset." Now, in the first chapter of Genesis are thirty statements which imply decisively the existence of an intelligent Creator who speaks and acts, and are therefore equivalent to categorical assertions of the existence of God. But no such statements implying the deathlessness of the human spirit are to be found throughout the Bible. This loose kind of argument has, by destroying confidence in its methods, done much to discredit theology.

On p. 437 we read, "It may be added that annihilation is to all intents and purposes an eternal punishment of sin committed in time." On p. 442 we read, "It must be admitted that the theologians of this new school (annihilation) have steadfastly asserted some fundamental principles. They hold fast the doctrine of the eternal punishment of sin." This is a most important admission. For the phrase *eternal punishment*, solemnly used by Christ in Matthew xxv. 46 in awful contrast to the *eternal life* awaiting the

righteous, is the strongest argument from the Bible for the endless suffering of the lost. This argument is surrendered by Dr. Pope, who anticipated my volume on *The Last Things* by asserting that final extinction of men created by God for endless blessedness would be eternal punishment. (See below, a quotation from Irenæus.) He also anticipated me by endeavouring to prove that extinction of the lost is not taught in the Bible. On the other hand, he agrees with Edward White by saying, on p. 443, that "Christ comes not to save an immortal sinner; but to give a mortal sinner, who had sinned, the offer of immortality." And I do not see that he has brought any serious objection to the doctrine of annihilation, except by overturning, as I do, arguments in its favour. Certainly he has done nothing to prove the immortality of the soul.

Much more definite and valuable, in reference to the subject before us, than either of the works quoted above is Dr. Laidlaw's admirable volume on *The Bible Doctrine of Man*. In lecture vi. he discusses "Man's nature and a future life." On pp. 224 ff. we read, "During most of the Christian centuries, the Scripture doctrine concerning the life to come has been held as bound up with and based upon that of the indestructibility of the human soul. Man is a being who must live after death, must live for ever. Conscience declares that present conduct and character are to influence an eternal hereafter. Nay, the very make of the soul tells of the timeless and changeless sphere to which it belongs. The doctrine of the natural and necessary immortality of the human soul has been religiously cherished as of the very essence of the scriptural or Christian belief in a life to come. . . . More cautious Christian opponents of the prevailing method of identifying divine revelation as to a future life with the tenet of the soul's indestructibility have preferred to rest the doctrine of survival on the resurrection of Jesus and the affirmations of Scripture, without

insisting on the soul's natural immortality. . . . The Bible does not affirm the immortality of the soul in any abstract or general form. Much less does it define the constitution of the soul as involving its necessary indestructibility. So much we may freely concede." This last is a most important concession. Throughout the volume Dr. Laidlaw does not appeal to the Bible in proof of the popular doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls. Nor does he assert plainly that he accepts this doctrine.

The writer continues: "But when it is said that the notion of a separable soul or spirit in man is unscriptural, is nothing but a philosophical figment, and that the soul's separate existence is no necessary part of Christian belief, we are prepared on the strongest grounds to demur. . . . The personal existence of human beings after death is a doctrine that pervades the whole system of Scripture. The Bible sustains and illumines, in the most remarkable and varied ways, man's instinctive belief that he was made for an everlasting existence. . . . It would be wrong to import into these terms (*breath* and *spirit*) the metaphysical idea of an indissoluble substance, and thus commit the Scripture to the philosophical argument that the soul cannot die because it cannot be dissolved or dissipated. But the author of the Book of Wisdom seems to be fairly following the doctrine of Genesis when he says, 'For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own peculiar nature.'" With all this I heartily agree.

Dr. Laidlaw then (on p. 229) distinguishes between "the Bible mode of affirming man's future existence and the methods of other religions and philosophies," especially that of Plato, "which has such close affinities with scriptural doctrine as to have been greatly identified with Christian eschatology, elaborated by the schoolmen as the foundation of the faith, and often preached from the Christian pulpit

as a substitute for the fuller light of the gospel on life and immortality." So on p. 233: "Gradually, in Christian schools, the Greek influence prevailed, and even in the Christian Church the idea of the soul's immortality for long took the place of the Scripture doctrine of a future life." In other words, our author admits, as was proved in my first paper, that the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul was derived from Plato.

Dr. Laidlaw writes, on p. 240: "This theory of 'conditional immortality,' or of the ultimate annihilation of the wicked, may claim one advantage over its rival, the theory of universal restoration. In its appeal to the certainty of future punishment and to the irrevocable character of future destiny, it is somewhat more in accordance than the other with the findings at once of conscience and of Scripture. But both theories are incompetent solutions of the awful problem which they attempt. It is obvious that neither of them can be made to consist with the whole doctrine of Scripture as to the future of man." But the writer does not discuss the popular theory of the endless suffering of the lost, nor does he give his own interpretation of the teaching of the Bible about the future punishment of sin.

By asserting that the popular doctrine of the natural immortality of the soul—*i.e.* of the necessary and endless permanence of all human souls—has no place in the Bible, and differs from the teaching of the New Testament, and that it was derived from Plato, and by his own rejection of this doctrine as destitute of adequate proof, Dr. Laidlaw has anticipated my teaching in these papers. It is worthy of note that, while rejecting, as not taught in the Bible, the theory of conditional immortality, he does not quote any passage of Holy Scripture as contradicting it.

We come now to Dr. Salmond's interesting and attractive and useful volume on *The Christian Doctrine of Immortality.*

This title he appropriately explains in the preface: "It will be seen that the word 'Immortality' is used in the large sense which Paul gives it when he speaks of 'this mortal' putting on 'immortality.' Life, eternal life, the immortality of the man, not the immortality of the soul, is the message of the Bible, alike in Old Testament and in New, in Christ and in Apostle, in John and in Paul." The writer expounds, in general agreement with these papers, the opinions of the Jews and of various ancient nations about a future life; and indicates correctly the essential difference between the teaching of Plato and that of the New Testament. He adds, on p. 156, that "when Christ came, Hellenic thought ruled the world."

Dr. Salmond expounds also the teaching of Christ, the general apostolic doctrine, and the Pauline doctrine. Of Christ he says, on p. 393, "His gift to men is not the inculcation of the truth of an endless existence, not any dogma of the soul's deathless perpetuity, but the revelation of a higher life, and the inspiration of a hope stronger than any speculation, sacredly governing conduct, and accessible to the humblest soul." Of Paul he says, on p. 573, "He never contemplates a simple immortality of soul; he never argues for man's survival merely on the ground that there is a mind or spirit in him." It is quite clear that, in Dr. Salmond's view, the Bible does not teach the endless permanence of all human souls. This last doctrine, which has occupied so large a place in popular theology, he passes over almost in silence.

Of "the doctrine of Annihilation" our author says, on p. 592, that "It had a large and well-understood place in pre-Christian speculation. It assumed different shapes, and was taught in different interests in the faiths and philosophies of the old world." He thus admits, in harmony with my second paper, that Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul was far from universal in the ancient world.

On p. 593 Dr. Salmond says, in my opinion justly, that the advocates of conditional immortality have overstated their case by claiming as on their side the earliest Christian writers. But he mistranslates his most important quotation in proof of the endless suffering of the lost, viz. words attributed to Polycarp in chapter xi. of the Epistle of the Church at Smyrna, which should be, not "perpetual torment of eternal fire," but "the fire of the coming judgment and eternal punishment"; same words as in Matthew xxv. 46. The same mistranslation is given in Dr. Pusey's book on *Eternal Punishment*.

Our author says, on p. 595, that Irenæus "speaks also of 'immortal souls' and of the 'eternal' duration of punishments." This father frequently quotes Matthew xxv. 41, "the eternal fire"; e.g. bk. iv. 28. 2, iii. 23. 3; but so far as I have noticed he does not expound the meaning of the word *eternal* in this verse or in v. 46. Unfortunately Dr. Salmond does not tell us where Irenæus uses the phrase "immortal souls." Possibly he refers to the two passages mentioned on p. 206 of my last paper. On the other hand, Irenæus argues, in bk. v. 27. 2, as I do on p. 176 of my *Last Things*, that "the good things from God being eternal and endless, the privation of them also is, for this reason, *eternal and endless*": αἰώνιος καὶ ἀτελεύτος. Notice that here the word *endless* is added to the word *eternal* as a description of the loss of endless blessing. This suggests strongly that the words were not synonymous; for otherwise the addition would be meaningless tautology.

In contending against the theory of conditional immortality, Dr. Salmond sometimes betrays a disposition to accept the doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls. He quotes with approval, on p. 610, a writer who says that "the notion of a soul immortal enough to live through death, but not immortal enough to live for ever, is too childish to be entertained beyond the

little school of literalists who delight in it." Again, on p. 624, he asks: "If man is not inherently immortal, why should the sinful man subsist at all after death"? The answer to this question is easy. God has decreed that, whatever a man sows, this he shall also reap. And, because for this reaping there is not space in the present life, He has decreed that after death comes judgment, this last involving conscious existence at least for a time. But this moral necessity for the survival of the wicked affords no proof or presumption that they will abide for ever in suffering. For, though we can see a moral necessity for judgment after death, we can conceive no moral ends to be served by endless permanence of evil in this awful form, an irremovable blemish on the rescued and glorified universe of God. Certainly the above suggestion is not absurd. It has been vindicated as legitimate by not a few modern theologians who cannot be dismissed as "childish."

An all-important point in Dr. Salmond's book is that while evidently disliking the doctrine of the ultimate extinction of the wicked, and apparently favouring the traditional doctrine of the endless permanence of all human souls, this involving endless suffering of the lost, he does not state plainly his own belief. Certainly he brings no proof from the Bible or elsewhere for the popular doctrine of the immortality of the soul. He thus affords strong presumption that it is not taught there, and that it does not rest on any reliable evidence.

In another paper I shall quote other writers holding various other views differing widely from those quoted above.

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