

*The Button-Caster's* voice (from behind the house). We meet at the last crossway, Peer ; and then we shall see—I say no more.

*Solvejg* (sings louder as the day strengthens). I will rock thee, I will watch. Sleep and dream, my darling.

It is true that Peer Gynt has still to meet the Button-moulder. He has still to stand up at the great Assizes. What then is his new confidence ? It is this : that in any world in which the Button-moulder has a place there will be a place likewise for Solvejg.

There are two rocks on which man must cast anchor,—or be wrecked,—woman and God. For many souls, those two rocks are outcroppings of the same underlying reef.

JOHN A. HUTTON.

## STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY.

### VII. UNIVERSAL RESTORATION.

It is a question of some real interest, whether Christian faith involves any particular belief respecting the destiny of those who persist in hostility to God. If the doctrine of verbal inspiration has gone, and we no longer feel obliged to give a place to every isolated Bible statement, it may be contended that the gaze of faith is bent solely on the Christian prospect, and that about everything outside the pencil of light cast by Jesus, and visible only to His followers, it must be wholly agnostic. In the main, I should hold, this contention is sound ; but a single reservation ought to be attached to it. Not even here can we escape from the logical principle that the knowledge of opposites is one. If faith predicates something of the redeemed, it must tell something also about those who spurn redemption. The words in which their lot is described may be preponderantly negative, but they contain a real meaning. And the positive knowledge available

for the believing mind in regard to "the obstinately wicked" may perhaps be stated as follows: It must be evil for those who are evil, as long as their evilness remains. If God be the Power whom we meet in Jesus, fixed opposition to His will must, while it lasts, entail suffering. This is true if the next life has a moral constitution.

But taking this principle, which comprehends, as I think, all the Church can be sure of regarding the adversaries of Christ, we find that, if we are resolved to have a theory, it may be applied in three forms or three directions, and that of the resulting rival hypotheses no single one thus far is entitled to exclusive favour. First it may be said: It is evil for the evil, while their evilness persists, but it does not persist for ever, since all at last turn to God, saved as through fire. This is the doctrine of Universal Restoration. Next it may be said: The lot of the evil is evil, as long as they exist, but we have reason to believe they do not exist for ever. They together with their evilness are finally extinguished. This is the doctrine of annihilation or Conditional Immortality. Lastly, it may be said: Evil beings remain so endlessly, and they endlessly suffer for it. This is the doctrine of Eternal Punishment. Whatever may be said of these views, they can at least be all subsumed under the inexorable moral principle just formulated. In different modes they all proclaim that as long as a finite spirit is in conscious antagonism to God, the fact will register itself in penalty. Nor is this penalty mechanical; it is the reaction of Divine holiness upon sin.

At this point two considerations join to support the general finding at which we have arrived. One is that all three views have been held by acknowledged Christian thinkers. The theology of the subject has invariably tended to work out in one of these three forms. Certainly this

does not show them to be all equally probable, but it suggests something in each which makes it attractive to Christian thought. But the other question has scarcely been asked, or has at least not been debated, whether all three may not be construed as differing applications of one basal principle, and whether the principle itself is not all we can be certain of.

The second consideration is that the same three opinions have appealed for support to the New Testament, and have all professed to find it. I do not say they are right, but the fact is unquestionable. What does it mean? It means that the policy of deciding between these divergent eschatologies by simply opening the New Testament will not serve. Apart from the fact that the authority of New Testament teaching is spiritual, not mediated by proof-texts or imposed on faith as if by statute, what we have to do with is a *prima facie* impression that isolated passages in Gospels or Epistles seem to favour each of the three views. As it has been put: "Reading these sets of passages with one theory already in mind, as most men do, we instinctively accommodate the remaining two to this one; we read it into them, and think that we find it there."<sup>1</sup> It is more than doubtful, for example, whether St. Paul believed in the annihilation of the impenitent; but it is plain some good exegetes think he did, and unless one's own exegesis is put forward as infallible, it is impossible to deny to their view all plausibility. Hence the question cannot be solved by the method of citing texts, and in point of fact this method has not solved it.

It may be rewarding to scrutinise in turn the distinct theories above mentioned; they all stand for live issues. We first turn to the doctrine of Universal Restitution.

If at this moment a frank and confidential plebiscite of

<sup>1</sup> Illingworth, *Reason and Revelation*, 229.

the English-speaking ministry were taken, the likelihood is that a considerable majority would adhere to Universalism. They may no doubt shrink from it as a dogma, but they would cherish it privately as at least a hope. How strong the desire is to believe in the salvation of all was recently shown by the sermon of a prominent English preacher—all whose sympathies are orthodox—on the loss of the *Titanic* in which he expressed the confident hope that all the victims of that lamentable disaster would be saved, as having called on God in the hour of death. On the psychological tenability of his view we need say nothing. It certainly cannot be known that he is right, yet it is not impossible.

From early times there have not been lacking champions of Universalism against the more sombre doctrine which ranked as correct. Minds imbued with the Greek love of harmony naturally turned to it. Alexandria was its home. Origen felt it should be taught esoterically, and that if proclaimed to all it might seduce some into ruinous laxity.<sup>1</sup> But he was quite clear that the development of souls does not end with this life; there remains a purification of fallen spirits; all are led back to God, rising from plane to plane. "Stronger than all the evils in the soul," he writes, "is the Word, and the healing power that dwells in Him; and this healing He applies, according to the will of God, to every man. The consummation of all things is the destruction of evil."<sup>2</sup> Universalism lay in the logic of Origen's system;<sup>3</sup> it agreed with his conception of God, which wholly subordinated righteousness to love, with an interpretation of human freedom that left it to the end mutable and unfixed,

<sup>1</sup> c. *Cels.* VI. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* VIII. 72.

<sup>3</sup> It was condemned by the Synod of Constantinople in 543. Origen had left open the possibility of future falls, for though an infinite number of aeons has elapsed, still an infinite number is to come.

and with a view of sin that reckons it as weakness and darkness rather than definite forceful antagonism to God. The two Gregories and some members of the school of Antioch shared the opinion of Origen. The West energetically disapproved it, and the pantheist Scotus Erigena buttressed it with arguments which can scarcely have helped it into favour. It received no countenance from Thomas Aquinas or the Reformers, though Anabaptist leaders preached it openly, but singularly enough was a favourite (if also secret) doctrine with some prominent Pietists of the eighteenth century, who believed they had Bengel on their side. A few of them claimed to have had confirmatory visions.

The theory in modern times owes its classic statement to Schleiermacher. He was a theological determinist of the purest strain, and obviously the transition to Universalism is simpler for a determinist than for any one else. If there is but one will in the universe, and this a will of Almighty Grace, it is very credible that at the long last "the love of God will triumph over the dying struggles of the human rebellion." Schleiermacher puts all the arguments in their most powerful and appealing form. We meet in his pages the familiar contentions to the effect that all men are predestined to salvation in Christ, and that the Divine purpose cannot fail; that no creature can be possessed of absolute freedom; that sin in time can never merit an eternal punishment. But what is peculiar to him is the exquisite sympathy and force with which the psychological argument is stated.

If, as may be assumed, future punishment is spiritual in kind, and pertains to conscience, the lost must be regarded as actually better than they were on earth, when conscience gave them no pain; and the pain of conscience which supervenes after death thus raises them above the old

self. But if they are better, it is unjust that they should suffer more. The living movement of remorse is a good which God will acknowledge. Turning now to the saved, he urges that sympathy with the lost must trouble their joy, all the more that its keenness is not mitigated, as it may be here, by a sense of hope. It may doubtless be argued that if there is such a thing as eternal ruin, it is essentially just, since none may gain the vision of God but those who share His righteousness. But this, far from quenching our sympathy, rather warms and intensifies it. He who suffers innocently is upheld to a wonderful degree by fellowship with God and the consciousness of his own integrity ; whereas in the case supposed, one who is bearing the just reward of his deeds can have no such inward comfort. It is moreover impossible to conceive personal survival of death save as including memory of the past, a past in which some of the redeemed were linked by the closest ties to some of the lost : and when we look back and recall a time when we were as little regenerate as they, this also adds a profounder grief to our pity. Not only so, but the very dispensation of grace which brought life to us passed them by ; and the bitter thought cannot be wholly silenced that by their loss we have gained, for the absolute interdependence of the various elements of the Divine plan obliges us to affirm a real connexion between the grant of life to some and the refusal of it to others.<sup>1</sup> His conclusion is that the difficulties of believing that any human soul will be condemned to endless woe are insurmountable, and such a doctrine ought not to be held or taught publicly without statements from Christ's own lips much more decisive than any we actually have. The difference between souls is one rather of earlier and later reception into the

<sup>1</sup> It is at this point that Schleiermacher's argument is most distinctively his own.

kingdom of Christ—a distinction inseparable from the idea of a world developing in time.<sup>1</sup>

The attempt has been made to cast upon Schleiermacher's general argument, and specially on the place he gives to sympathy, the stigma of sentimentalism. But he does not seem to go much beyond the passionate cry of St. Paul : "I could wish that I myself were anathema from Christ for my brethren's sake."

It is owned even by convinced adherents of Universalism that at best the support of the New Testament is dubious. The Gospels contain words which, at least on a first inspection, seem clearly to assert the eternity of punishment, and an offset to this has been found in problematic allusions to forgiveness after death, the omnipotence of Divine love, and the absolute triumph predicted for the Kingdom. There is a tendency to press isolated words in parables, or sayings of Jesus primarily relating to other themes. The particularly unyielding character of the Synoptic record has been explained by saying that the Gospel sources represent a time when the apostles had only imperfectly broken with the prejudices of Judaism ; it was long before they apprehended the real mind of Jesus, who in terms had accommodated His teaching to their inherited beliefs. Or it has been maintained that what the New Testament offers, as in the case of the Trinity, is but seeds and beginnings of doctrine to be evolved later ; it being forgotten that no real parallel exists, inasmuch as the revelational conception of the Trinity is nowhere implicitly negated, as dogmatic Universalism quite definitely is in the words : "These shall go

<sup>1</sup> In Germany, so far as I know, Universalism has been definitely argued for by no prominent writer on Dogmatic since Schweizer, the leading exponent of Schleiermacher's principles. This is remarkable, for the hold of Universalism on the general mind is probably greater than ever, and has quite certainly grown within the past generation. On the other hand, Conditionalism is favoured by a large proportion of recent German theologians.

away into eternal punishment" (Matt. xxv. 46). But at least in the Epistles a different prospect is thought to be opened up, and it is in fact upon Pauline texts, almost exclusively, that the case has rested.

Much importance has been attached to 1 Corinthians xv. 28, where the ultimate state of perfected redemption is indicated by the words, "that God may be all in all," with apparently an implied prophecy that all men, without exception, will at last share in the Divine life. It obviously is a crucial point whether this is a legitimate deduction from the quoted phrase. Other verses are these: "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive"; "Through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life"; "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all"; "That in the name of Jesus every knee should bow" (1 Cor. xv. 22; Rom. v. 18; Rom. xi. 32; Phil. ii. 10). With these is taken the saying reported in the Fourth Gospel: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (xii. 32). It must be allowed that the primary significance of these verses appears to be as much in favour of Universalism as various sayings in the Gospels are against it, and that if they stood alone in St. Paul's teaching they would leave no reasonable doubt as to his mind. It is not surprising that they have been interpreted as containing so ample a view of the Divine purpose as to involve the final recovery of all men. But when we look at their context and meaning more closely, three facts emerge.

In the first place, a more accurate exegesis proves some of them to be irrelevant. Thus 1 Corinthians xv. 22 means simply that as all united to Adam by physical ties suffer death, so all united to Christ by spiritual ties shall be made alive, and Romans v. 18 means the same thing. Those who do not belong to Christ are not in view. Again,



Romans xi. 32 is undoubtedly a great affirmation of the universality of God's will to save—to save all, whether Jews or Gentiles ; but since redemption for St. Paul is conditioned by faith, it throws no light on the question how far that saving will is to be accomplished and whether all men will yield to the Divine love. So far as language goes, the phrase “ that God may be all in all ” is satisfied by the doctrine of the annihilation of the wicked. Equally with Universalism, it teaches that in the end no existent human life will remain unpenetrated by the Divine powers. Secondly, in certain Pauline utterances there is no ambiguity at all. Verses like these cannot be evaded : “ If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled in them that are perishing ” ; “ Who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord ” ( 2 Cor. iv. 3 ; 2 Thess. i. 9 ). In such passages we seem to hear an echo of Jesus' parables of the Wheat and the Tares, the Wise and Foolish Virgins, the Marriage Feast and the man without a wedding garment. One has only to scan a list of terms used by St. Paul to describe the fate of the unbelieving to have all doubt as to his view removed.<sup>1</sup> Thirdly, it is incredible if that a lover of his race so unwearied in compassion as the apostle had cherished a conviction of the ultimate redemption of all, he should nowhere have allowed a hint of it to escape him, or freely indulged in statements of a diametrically opposite tenor. These statements, it may be noted, occur not merely in early writings, whose point of view St. Paul might later have transcended, but in the very letters which are thought to yield proof of his Universalism. It is a fundamental principle of interpretation that passages which superficially admit of different constructions ought to be viewed in the light of those which are unequivocally clear. In the present instance we cannot transgress the rule with-

<sup>1</sup> See Kennedy, *St. Paul's Conceptions of the Last Things*, 313.

out making St. Paul responsible for self-contradiction of the grossest kind.

It must also be held that various attempts—as by Oetinger and Maurice—to evacuate the word “eternal” of its natural sense have come to nothing. As is well known, it has been urged that “æonian” signifies not without end, but something whose end is hidden or inconceivable by us; that it is best translated by words like supra-temporal, transcendent, perfect; that at most it means lasting for an age or ages, not strictly everlasting. Naturally it is pointed out in reply that “æonian” is the epithet uniformly attached also to “life” or “salvation,” where on every ground a limited sense is impossible. How apostolic writers could have expressed the eternity of bliss and woe otherwise than by terms they have actually used, it is impossible to conceive. Even if this particular word can be forced into meaning less than it says, and the endlessness of destruction for St. Paul left an open question, it is beyond the power of interpretation to extrude from it the notion of *finality*. Let the time import or arithmetical aspect be put in abeyance, still we are faced by that of moral quality. And if this implies any time character at all, it is necessarily one that “fills the mind and imagination to the furthest horizon and beyond it,” leaving no ulterior prospect.

It is strictly true, then, to say that Bible proof of Universalism cannot be found. At most it may be contended that alongside of passages which conceive the punishment as everlasting others exist which appear to be in harmony with the doctrine of Conditional Immortality.

The universalistic view, as we have seen, is probably much more wide-spread to-day than ever before; and as long as it continues to be held as a private opinion, a wish or hope or hypothesis which brings relief to the feelings

and excludes other intolerably painful views, no one surely can desire to quarrel with it. It points in a direction wistfully scanned by all. So long as men believe in God and love their fellows they will find it hard to conceive the ultimate failure of the Divine mercy to win any whom it seeks, or the complete atrophy in man of the capacity to be God's child. Surveying human life and its conditions, they will be apt to reason that "if freedom has issued in the practical universality of sin, we may at least hope that it will issue, through the divine grace, in the universality of salvation."<sup>1</sup> Hope set in this key is a more venial infringement of the all but total ignorance with respect to the lot of the impenitent which, as I urged at the outset of this paper, is ordained for faith. But its place has been often taken by a confident dogmatism. The position has been set forth that Universalism is known to be true, and that accordingly it may claim to rank as part of the Gospel which men have a right to hear. This position must be examined briefly.

And first, let us put aside one or two arguments as unsound. Thus it will not do to say that even unquestioning acceptance of Universal Restitution must weaken a man's zeal for the Christian propaganda. It is likely enough to have done so in certain cases, as extremer forms of Calvinism did. But we need only recall names like Erskine of Linlathen, Crossley of Manchester, Blumhardt in Germany—all convinced Universalists but also active promoters of evangelism—to feel that as a whole the charge is sweeping and unjust. These men, if we are to credit their own story, felt a deeper zest in service due to the new hope. The other charge, that Universalism favours moral laxity, goes a step farther, and would be formidable if proved, but it is only fair to point out that no Christian teacher has ever denied that impenitent sin will be punished hereafter. On

<sup>1</sup> Wheeler Robinson, *Christian Doctrine of Man*, 338.

the contrary, Universalists have joined the rest in proclaiming a penalty which is sure and awful. What they decline to believe is that in the strict or unqualified sense it will be everlasting.

On the other hand, dogmatic Universalism may justly be called a departure from Christian ground, as Christianity is revealed in the New Testament. The apostles are clear as to what redemption is. They are clear as to the terms—terms divinely wide and gracious—on which the sinful are pardoned, united to God, filled with that Spirit which is an earnest of eternal life. Apart from this, they have no conception at all of what it means to be redeemed. And when schemes are drawn up whereby all men eventually must be swept into the Divine Kingdom, they appear to have lost touch with the moral realities of New Testament religion. It is in this sense that the proclaiming of Universalism as a certainty is rightly repelled as disloyal to the Gospel, for nothing will permanently commend itself to the believing mind which tends, as such a dogma must, to lower the ethical significance of the present life. The preacher has failed who leaves a moral impression at war with that which Jesus left; and Universalism, taken as a message for the world, is at war with Jesus' teaching about the future. The suggestion that He may have educated us beyond Himself, enabling us to take wider views, is hardly worth discussion. To call it improbable or unconvincing is a weak expression. Whatever our instinctive wishes, we may well shrink from supposing that we have attained to worthier or more ample conceptions of the Divine love, its depth and height, than were attained by Jesus.

No one can miss the fact, plainly visible in history, that the advocates of Universalism have mostly been unwilling to announce it publicly. This was the attitude of Origen, of Bengel, of Zinzendorf. In other words, it did not impress

them as part of the Gospel ; for one cannot even imagine any part of the Gospel—enforcing itself as such because vitally implied in the redemptive experience of Christ—which it is not at once a duty to proclaim and a boon to hear. But to be told that the salvation of all is certain makes no man more willing to be reconciled to God. It does not help him to believe that this is the accepted time. It puts the urgency of grace into the future at the cost of the present. And the whole conception of esoteric doctrine is alien to Christianity. Inevitably it leads to the notion of a double truth, a public and a private truth ; of course with the understanding that only the private one is true.

Again, it is but fair to point out that Universalism as a dogma has tended to argue the question on a sub-moral plane. It has too much operated with a Divine love which is a thing, a nature force comparable to magnetic attraction, and advancing to its goal with overwhelming and pre-  
visible certainty. Whatever be the analogies employed—physical or chemical in the old rationalism, biological since the application of Darwinian theory to religion—it must be objected that they reach a solution of the problem by eliminating one aspect of the facts. It is not that they have the love of God on their side, while their opponents have His holiness. The very point is that love which forces its way is not the love revealed in Jesus. Human freedom, on this view, is something destined to be swallowed up in grace ; it is lost, not found, in the redeeming activity of God ; the two are rivals, one of which must go under, while the other triumphs by the abolition of its opposite.<sup>1</sup> But do we know enough to say a man may not wrap him-

<sup>1</sup> But it is worth pointing out that the reality of freedom is equally denied by the dogmatic assertion of the opposite view, that men cannot change after death ; which may be thought another reason for agnosticism.

self in a defiance that renders him inaccessible to the motives of the Gospel? I do not say it is so; but to maintain categorically that a time *must* come when the human soul will yield to moral suasion it has resisted throughout life is to exhibit a very deficient sense of our ignorance. Observation, as far as it is a guide, justifies no such assurance. We meet with bad men in whom good still lingers, and who give us a clear impression that repentance never is impossible; we also meet bad men, who have tasted deeply of sin, its impotence and failure and misery, yet have not been softened but only confirmed in evil. Grant that educative Divine influences persist on the farther side of death, laden with infinite mercy; grant that hearts may be changed there and wills blended with the will of God; still the very reasons for admitting the possibility of this are also reasons for allowing that change may be resisted, and that permanently. If it be felt that this is to limit omnipotence, it must be replied that not all conceptions of omnipotence are Christian, and that some real limits are involved in the creation of man. We must not make salvation a nature-process, embracing God and man in a necessary drift of change.

No argument counts for more, I imagine, than that which puts Universalism forward as the only view by which the government and Fatherhood of God is relieved from partial frustration. Short of a redemption leaving no one out, it is said, the Divine purpose fails. But this really is to gain an unprovable conclusion by turning it into an axiom. If it is compatible with holy love to create a race into which sin may find entrance, because its members possess a nature constituted in self-determination, it may also be right that personality should never be invaded at any stage. It may be no more true to say that God fails because He cannot force men to trust Him than to say so because He

cannot alter the laws of number.<sup>1</sup> In any case the great problem would be, not that evil had no end, but that it had a beginning.<sup>2</sup> We need to remind ourselves once more that the Christian hope can appeal to no other source or guarantee of truth than the experience of redemption which has been evoked by the Gospel. This experience, as a present fact, is in no way affected, much less undermined, by any uncertainty or ignorance to which we have to resign ourselves. We have no right to measure the infinitude of Divine love by the hidden possibilities of the future, or at all to condition it by what may yet transpire with respect to men not now in Christ. We believe in the endless love of God, for it has touched and saved us in His Son, We can be certain of this, now and here ; it is a fact of knowledge which no doubt as to something else can in the least

<sup>1</sup> Here is how a philosopher deals with the point. In his *Pragmatism* (pp. 290-295) the late Professor James supposes the world's author to give us the option of taking part in a world not certain to be saved, "a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its "own level best." And he asks : "Should you in all seriousness, if participation in such a world were proposed to you, feel bound to reject it as not safe enough ? Would you say that, rather than be part and parcel of so fundamentally pluralistic and irrational a universe, you preferred to relapse into the slumber of nonentity from which you had been momentarily aroused by the tempter's voice ? Of course if you are normally constituted, you would do nothing of the sort. There is a healthy-minded buoyancy in most of us which such a universe would exactly fit. The world proposed would seem 'rational' to us in the most living way." Later on he puts a series of questions : "May not the claims of tender-mindedness go too far ? May not religious optimism be too idyllic ? Must *all* be saved ? Is no price to be paid in the work of salvation ? Is the last word sweet ? Is all 'yes, yes' in the universe ? Doesn't the fact of 'no' stand at the very core of life ? Doesn't the very 'seriousness' that we attribute to life mean that ineluctable noes and losses form a part of it ?"

Of course, what really matters here is whether the choice proposed and the questions asked are respectively proposed and asked in view of the authentically Christian idea of God, as One with whom "all things are possible."

<sup>2</sup> Cf Newman, *Grammar of Assent*, 422.

impair. Otherwise hope would wrongly be made the basis of faith, instead of its fruit and unfolding.

Thus we return to the note struck at the outset, a note of nearly complete agnosticism. Sin, while any sin remains, entails suffering and exclusion, for we worship One with whom evil cannot dwell. Whether it will or will not remain for ever, we cannot know ; nor is there reason to think that on earth we shall ever know. No one certainly is in a position to affirm that there must be those who eternally remain unsaved. This would be much more than to admit the possibility of eternal sin ; it would plant intrinsic moral dualism at the heart of things.

H. R. MACKINTOSH.

*THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS : A REPLY.*

DR. KIRSOPP LAKE, in the June number of the EXPOSITOR, has given us a suggestive and interesting survey of the problem of the Epistle to the Philippians as it affects the authenticity, integrity and date of the letter.

It is pure gain that in such a difficult question, dependent for its solution on subtle distinctions and complex considerations, the writer should be dispassionate in his dealing with the material and impartial in his presentation of the critical views held with regard to it. This, in the view of the present writer, is no small part of the merit of the author's larger work on *The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*. He lays the material before his readers, tells them what expert critics think of it and what theories they deduce from it, indicating at the same time how far he himself goes along with them ; but always leaving, and even stimulating, the student to form his own conclusions.

The present writer is thus conscious of a very real debt of gratitude to the Professor, but he finds himself at variance