

sequently been familiar to a resident in Babylonia, as Kittel considers it practically certain the author of Is 45 was.

### The Syro-Phœnician Woman.

The story of our Lord's treatment of this woman's application raises difficulties which have seldom if ever been met in a thoroughly satisfactory way. The explanation needs only to be stated in order to be rejected, that Jesus spoke to her as He did 'in a moment of fatigue and irritation,' and that the woman of Canaan taught Him a lesson of wide sympathy and of charity (Pécaut and Réville)! But Professor BRUSTON, who writes on the subject in *La Vie Nouvelle* of 15th January last, finds the favourite explanation, 'that Jesus so spoke in order to try her faith,' inadequate. True, her faith was tried, and it came through the ordeal so marvellously, that Jesus exclaimed, 'O woman, great is thy faith!' But, according to Bruston, the key to the understanding of the narrative is

found in the spiritual condition of the *disciples* and the intention of Jesus to teach *them* a lesson in breadth of views and charity. In fact, it was an acted parable, Jesus in His treatment of the woman assuming for the moment the character of the disciples with their Jewish prejudices and exclusiveness, in order that seeing the evil of this disposition when *exhibited by another* they might be shamed into better feelings and prepared for a mission wider than one to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The Canaanite woman must have been startled, indeed, by Jesus' language about taking the children's bread and casting it to the dogs, but we may believe that the words were accompanied by a look which reassured her and robbed them of their sting. And her reply would convince the disciples that a despised pagan might have a faith as real as their own; and be as worthy as themselves to enter the kingdom founded by the Messiah.

J. A. SELBIE.

*Maryculter.*

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## Immortality: One Step Further.

AN OPEN LETTER TO PROFESSOR J. AGAR BEET, D.D.

BY THE REV. E. PETAVEL, D.D., GENEVA.

LOCARNO, SWITZERLAND,  
8th February 1898.

REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—Having carefully read your valuable book on *The Last Things*,<sup>1</sup> I will now submit to you my remarks, as kindly suggested by yourself.

I must begin by expressing the great pleasure I have had in finding so many points on which we are in agreement. I have admired the charitable efforts you have made in order to state fairly the views of your opponents, and I rejoice over the results which you have reached by your conscientious scholarship; they are not very different from the conclusions to which I have been led by a lifelong research.

My observations will be in answer to a question of yours. In a note, dated 8th December, you say: 'I simply teach that the future punishment of the finally impenitent is utter and final ruin,

<sup>1</sup> London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1897.

and refuse to make any assertion about their condition. Is it needful to try to go further?'

My frank reply is in the affirmative. On both biblical and rational grounds, I think, and I hope to show you that it is 'needful'; that you are logically bound to advance *one step further*.

But before attacking your present standpoint, I must attempt to defend my book—*The Problem of Immortality*—against a criticism of yours. After an honourable mention of it, for which I feel grateful, you represent me as having 'mixed together and identified two distinct issues, namely, the essential immortality of the soul and the ultimate extinction of the lost, and accepted as proof of the latter every disproof of the former' (*The Last Things*, p. 304). I observe that you do not support this statement by any quotation; and that if you will take the trouble of

looking at the first section of my seventh chapter, you will find that I have duly entered into the distinction which you specify. I say, for instance (p. 191), 'Separated from the source of life, the sinner is advancing by a slow and funereal march towards eternal death,' meaning that, deprived of essential immortality, the soul cannot but eventually cease to be. Indeed, the distinction is involved throughout in the main argument of the book.

I have explicitly admitted that there are two stages in the sad process, while, from a philosophical point of view, the first stage necessarily implies the second. Separated from its source, the river cannot but dry up; separated from the tree, the branch cannot but wither: both the river and the branch are gradually brought to nought. It is only a question of time. But as to the reprobate sinner, you doubt that the process of destruction will go so far; you teach that 'the future punishment of the finally impenitent is utter and final ruin, and refuse to make any assertion about their condition.' Allow me to remark that this sentence of yours seems somewhat self-contradictory; is not *ruin a condition*? And to declare that an object is in a state of ruin, is not this already an assertion as to its condition?

This word *ruin* is a favourite with you; it is, as it were, the pivot of your argumentation; it occurs more than seventy times as indicating the final destiny of the impenitent. I have several objections to make against the attempt to centre upon that word the biblical doctrine on the subject.

1. The term is not scriptural. I mean to say that, so far as I know, in the New Testament at least, which is the limited ground of your platform, it is not used in order to specify the final condition of reprobate sinners. The words used in Mt 7<sup>27</sup> and Lk 6<sup>40</sup> (πρωσιν and βηγμα) rather designate a *falling down* than a *standing ruin*, the latter being the meaning given to the word in your book.

2. Even if it were scriptural, the word would be simply a metaphor. Now 'metaphor,' as you say, 'unless supported by plain teaching, or at least by other metaphor agreeing with it only on the point in question,' is a most uncertain basis of doctrine. For all comparison fails somewhere. And when doctrine is built simply on one metaphor, it is impossible to distinguish between the essential teaching and the mere drapery of the

metaphor' (p. 164). 'Metaphor is an unsafe foundation for theological teaching' (p. 272).

3. The metaphor which you have placed as the foundation of your teaching is all the more 'unsafe' because it is inadequate, being taken from the domain of architecture, while man belongs to the organic and to the spiritual world. An architectural ruin is inanimate, while the human ruin which you speak of is supposed to be at least in some degree alive, and this difference seems to be all-important.

4. Owing to the inadequacy of your metaphor, you have not been able to give a proper definition of the ruin specified, neither have you shown how and in what measure the metaphor can apply to a human being. Such definition and limitation are lacking in your volume.

5. Had you attempted to define the meaning of this figure of speech, you would surely have detected that it is misleading, as suggesting a false notion of perpetuity. You have, indeed, refrained from calling the human ruins eternal or endless; you even hold that endlessness is not 'expressly and indisputably' asserted of them in the New Testament (p. 226); but neither have you warned your readers against the danger of assigning to them a ceaseless duration. This danger is all the greater because those ruins represent human souls, and the public at large is still imbued with the traditional idea, which you personally reject, of the imperishability of these souls.

You favour this error when you say (p. 156) that in the New Testament the idea conveyed by the word *destruction* is 'without thought of what becomes of the ruined object,' and (p. 181) that 'ruin is the loss of all that gives worth to existence,' thus implying a possibly indefinite perpetuation of the *existence* itself. On p. 226 you compare future remorse and mental anguish to 'an undying worm and unquenchable fire,' thus giving apparent support to the belief in eternal torments; while you say elsewhere that 'not one passage in the Bible, nor the whole Bible taken together, asserts explicitly, or clearly implies the endless torment even of those who reject the Gospel of Christ' (p. 210).

By leaving open this prospect you go directly against the positive teaching of the New Testament. According to the explicit declarations of the Apostle Paul, God 'only' is immortal (1 Ti 6<sup>16</sup>, Ro 1<sup>23</sup>). According to the equally explicit state-

ment of the Apostle John: 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever' (1 Jn 2<sup>17</sup>); the meaning evidently being that he *exclusively* abideth, lasts, or subsists for ever. The Greek word (*μένει*) brings out nothing but the ontological notion of duration, in contradistinction with a blessedness which is only an attribute or a characteristic of that endless existence.<sup>1</sup> And you have yourself admitted that this First Epistle of John 'indisputably' contains some of 'the maturest thought of the New Testament' (p. 252).

No doubt the only immortal God can render imperishable anyone or anything He pleases, but the writers of the New Testament have taken express care to limit His promise of doing so to those who 'seek immortality,' who believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and who thus, doing His will, 'become partakers of the divine nature' (2 P 1<sup>4</sup>).

All other beings are subject to the universal law of decay, which by an ever-progressive development undermines their existence. Their creation was already a miracle;<sup>2</sup> it would need another

<sup>1</sup> 'Eternal fixity and duration belong only to that order of things, and to those men, who are in entire accordance with the will of God' (Dean Alford, *N.T. for Engl. Readers. In loco*).

<sup>2</sup> This point is brought out in a striking manner by Athanasius in his celebrated treatise, *On the Incarnation of the Word of God*. He goes so far as to assert that, since man's starting-point was nothingness, he has no claim to continued existence, except the good pleasure of the Creator and obedience to His law. The idea that man's starting-point was nothingness seems to be in accordance with the biblical statement, 'Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return' (Gn 3<sup>19</sup>, cf. Ps 146<sup>4</sup>). The following extracts will give an idea of the line of reasoning adopted:—

'Chap. iii. sec. 3.—For God is good; He is indeed the Fount of goodness. . . . [In His goodness] He made all things out of nothing through His own Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. Pitying above all things on earth the race of men, and seeing that by reason of their origin they could not subsist for ever, He graced them with something more. Not simply similar to all the unreasoning animals upon earth did He make men, but according to His own image, endowing them with a share of His own Word's power, so that, possessing as it were a shadow of the Word and having become reasoning beings, they might have been able to remain happy in the enjoyment of the true and real life (*βίον*) of the saints in paradise. Sec. 4.—Besides, taking into account the fact that men had a power of choice between two different ways, God gave, as safeguards, of the grace granted to them, both a law and a special abode. For He introduced them into His own paradise, and gave them a law, so that, keeping the grace and remaining good, they might lead a life without sorrow, or pain, or anxiety, with

miracle to maintain them eternally in being in defiance of that law, and it would be presumptuous on our part, nay, antisciptural, to rely upon such a special interposition. As to the heavens, it is written, 'They shall perish, they shall wax old as a garment'; and modern astronomy confirms these predictions—it speaks of decaying and exploded suns and stars. Geology, too, teaches us that the highest mountains of the earth must all be brought down to the level of the sea. What, then, of architectural ruins, of the pyramids of Egypt, and of the embalmed mummies which they were intended to protect? They are all to be reduced, sooner or later, to dust, if not finally to a gaseous state, when 'the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up' (2 P 3<sup>10</sup>).

Human souls are not exempted from the operation of this universal and invincible law of decay; they are contingent beings, and their ultimate extinction must be hastened if they are left to be

the prospect of realizing in heaven the promise of incorruption. But if they transgressed, and turning aside became depraved, they were to experience in death the corruption which was in conformity with their original nature; and they were no longer to live in paradise, but thenceforth, being in a dying condition outside it, abide in death and in corruption.

'Chap. iv. sec. 4.—Thus, then, did God make man, and wished him to abide in incorruption; but men, lightly esteeming and turning away from the contemplation of God, and having become evil in their reasonings and purposes, . . . came under the previously threatened condemnation to death. Thenceforth they no more remained as they had been, but in their reasonings became utterly corrupted, and death reigned over them. For the transgression of the commandment caused them to retrograde towards their natural starting-point, so that just as they had come into existence out of non-existence, so they should naturally undergo corruption, and in due course of time be no more. Sec. 5.—If, then, men, being originally non-existent (*φύσιν ἔχοντες τὸ μὴ εἶναι*), were called into being by the intervention and loving-kindness of the Word, it would follow that when they deprived themselves of the knowledge of God and turned themselves back towards nothingness (for evil has no substantial existence, and good has substantial existence); so then, when they became alienated from God, the One who truly is, it was to be expected that they should also be deprived of eternal existence; that is, that they should be disintegrated, and remain in death and corruption. Sec. 6.—For man is by his nature mortal, seeing that he has come into being out of nothingness. On the other hand, on account of his likeness to Him who is, had he kept that likeness by an earnest consideration of God, he would have stayed the corruption to which he was liable by his nature, and would have remained uncorrupted.'

preyed upon by sin as by a deadly disease. By not taking into account this unavoidable prospect, you have acted like the ancient astronomers who ignored the universal law of gravitation; and I can here again shield myself against one of your criticisms. You have charged me with falling 'into the common fallacy of accepting lack of proof as proof to the contrary' (p. 305); but, considering the universal law of decay, want of proof as to immortality is presumptive evidence of ultimate annihilation. In my turn, I charge you with having admitted, without any proof to support it, a supposition which is *à priori* inadmissible; you imply, if you do not assert, that human ruins *may* last for ever. Is this supposition legitimate? Prove that it is so. Can you do it? In good logic the *onus probandi* rests upon you.

6. If you had begun by giving a definition, you might also have perceived that the word *ruin* can be turned against your own position of semi-agnosticism. You speak of an 'utter ruin,' but when is a building utterly ruined? Is it not when 'there shall not be left one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down,' according to the phrase used by Jesus (Mk 13<sup>2</sup>)? In the great day when, to quote your own words, 'the destruction which has already begun, and is daily making progress, will receive its full consummation' (p. 115, cf. 148), what will have become of the original building? Not one stone being left upon another, are we not compelled to confess that the *structure* really *exists no more*, that it has been in fact destroyed, annihilated? Its remains are no more a *structure* than the ashes of a bank-note that has been entirely burnt up are a bank-note. Passing now from the metaphor to the human relics, of which it is a symbol, what is there in the nature of things to prevent their *ruin* from becoming similarly the end of their existence?

7. Moreover, this same metaphor might become a slander against the wisdom of the Creator. Why should He maintain the existence of useless human ruins? They are not artistic, far from it; they deface the moral universe, why should they for ever 'cumber the ground?' (Lk 13<sup>7</sup>). What you have so well said of eternal torment, that it 'cannot be needful either for the lost . . . or for the saved,' is it not equally applicable to those human ruins? You have also repeatedly stated that the ruin of man is 'the loss of all that gives worth to existence' (pp. 113, 114, 123, etc.). How can you

reconcile with the wisdom of God the endless maintenance of a worthless being?

Allow me to add that human wrecks must be either conscious or unconscious. If they fall into unconsciousness—a prospect which you often represent as 'possible and conceivable' (p. 217, cf. 124, 148, 177, 198, 199, 227)—they would become, like corpses, all the more 'ghastly' (p. 207) and unworthy of preservation. If, on the contrary, they remain conscious—a prospect which you also consider possible—they will no doubt feel cruelly their wretchedness, and thus would be restored the 'endlessness of torment, of which you have declared that it 'cannot be needful' (p. 207), and that 'excluding a further end to be gained, it differentiates this doctrine from all others, and places it in a solitary depth of improbability or apparent impossibility' (p. 209).

Altogether your staple metaphor seems to be unbiblical, defective, inadequate, equivocal, misleading; it can be opposed to your personal views of the eschatological question, and implies a reproach against the wisdom of God the Creator. These dilapidated ruins, in which you have endeavoured to shelter the last remnant of a so-called orthodoxy, are tottering to their fall, and it seems strange that so judicious and penetrating a mind as yours should be content with an untenable position. I find no explanation but the subtle operation of the original lie, 'Ye shall not surely die!' Unconsciously to yourself the figment of an inherent and indefeasible immortality of the soul, which, theoretically, you reject, must practically have influenced your judgment in this matter.

*A priori*, it seems you must admit that, from a biblical and rational point of view, the ultimate extinction of the obstinate sinner is unavoidable. Still you would fain maintain *à posteriori* that the New Testament does not draw the legitimate conclusions of its own premises: 'The curtain is raised for a moment,' you say, 'revealing the anguish of the lost, and then falls, hiding them from our view' (p. 226).

I reply that this 'anguish of the lost' is only a preliminary scene of the drama, the issue of which is no less clearly revealed in various passages referring to the ultimate destruction of the confirmed rebels; this destruction is, to my mind, a synonym of the less popular word annihilation, and it *distinctly specifies* the 'fate' of which you assert that

it 'is not defined in unmistakable language' (p. 305).

Demurring to my conclusion, you generally maintain that *to destroy* does not mean to bring to nought, and you accuse me of not having 'investigated the meaning of the word destruction' (p. 305); I am bound, therefore, to follow you in this your last line of defence.

To begin with, I must call your attention to an apparent contradiction. You say (p. 298) that 'the Greek word rendered *deströy* . . . never means' extinction; yet (p. 308) you simply declare that it 'does not always mean to reduce to non-existence.' Is not this an implicit admission that *sometimes*, at least, the word means extinction? On the same page you 'readily admit that annihilation is a kind of destruction, and may always be so described'; (p. 112) you intimate that the ruined object can 'cease to exist'; (p. 148) that the object destroyed can be 'annihilated'; and lastly, you state that 'the word destruction does not in any way involve the permanence of the object destroyed' (p. 124).

I take note of these important admissions, and I will reciprocate them by granting in my turn that the word does not *always* mean total and final extinction. From our mutual concessions let us come to the conclusion that this expression, like many others of the same kind, is susceptible of two or several meanings, one of which might be called *comprehensive*, *exhaustive*, or *culminative*, while others are only *qualified* and *relative*, both the comprehensive and relative meanings being equally legitimate, and none of them to be adopted to the exclusion of the others. There is, as it were, a scale of meanings between the *terminus ad quem*, which is culminative, and the *terminus à quo*, which is the remotest approximation to the same. Shall I quote, for instance, the word *man*, which, in Jn 16<sup>21</sup>, is applied to a newly born child, or the word *worship*, which occasionally denotes honour rendered to a human being? A man may be *crushed* under the weight of responsibility, but that will not necessarily prevent him from being one day perhaps *crushed* literally in a railway accident. The same principle of lexicology applies specially to such words as *to destroy*, *to perish*, *to corrupt*, *to waste*, *to ruin*, *to die*, *to kill*, etc. The comprehensive meaning of *to perish* is to cease to exist, and *to destroy* means to cause to perish. We have already seen that the *complete destruction* of a build-

ing puts an absolute end to its existence by the dissociation of its constituent materials. This culminative meaning is paramount in every language, but in every language, also, the word for *destruction* is subject sometimes to explicit or implicit restrictions,—all depends upon the context in which it occurs. The bringing to nought may remain partial or incomplete, nevertheless, there is in every case something at least which ceases to be, or a cessation of existence is contemplated. The expression then partakes either of the nature of prolepsis, of that of synecdoche, or of hyperbole. An object may be considered as existing no more when its total disappearance is imminent or certain, or when its essential attributes are suppressed. In the Greek language, more especially, a man is said to be destroyed, to become as *non-existent*, when he has lost either his bodily life, or the most beloved member of his family, his fortune, his power, his reputation, etc.

Now, in order to control my definition, I will pass under review the principal references made in your tenth Lecture.

The ships of the Achæans are to be brought to nought by Hector, and he wishes to bring to nought the Achæans themselves. As to these the intended destruction remains partial, it affects the bodies only of his enemies; about the surviving shades Hector does not care in the least, they are for the time being absent from his mind. As you have pointed out, we too speak of a man 'putting an end to his existence' (p. 112), although we firmly believe that suicide can only bring to nought the physical life of the man. I read the other day in a newspaper the letter of a French officer, dated from Central Africa; in it the writer said, 'If we are destroyed, I shall keep even beyond death the regret of our failure.' He contemplated simultaneously both the suppression or annihilation of his terrestrial existence and a future life. The moral character of the dissolute men alluded to by Dion Chrysostom was gone, it existed no more, and, in the writer's judgment, a man without a moral character had ceased to be a man. The same remark applies to Mark Anthony, and to the companions of Ulysses, whom Circé had turned into swine. The physical life of the righteous Zechariah was violently put an end to. The practical use of the lost coin and of the lost sheep of the parables was also momentarily put an end to; to the owners, from a subjective point of view, and for the time

being, they were both, as you term it, 'virtually non-existent' (p. 112). I have called *putative* this use of the word (see *Problem of Immortality*, chap. vii., sec. vi. § 3, p. 214). The same remark is applicable to the supposed loss or death of the prodigal son. The old world was not annihilated by the flood, but its outward arrangement was brought to an end, and the word used (κόσμος) chiefly calls our attention to an outward arrangement. St. Paul did not believe in the essential immortality of the soul, he therefore considered that, if Christ had not risen, His dead disciples would have come to an end (ἀπόλωντο, 1 Cor 15<sup>18</sup>). The lost sheep of the house of Israel were rather *misled* than *lost*, but from a putative and proleptical point of view, they were on the way to a tragic end, and could only be rescued by the Good Shepherd. The withering of a corruptible crown (p. 143) is the beginning of decay, and cannot but bring the crown to an end in time. Sin has a tendency to 'extinguish' even 'the intelligence' (*ibid.*) of perverted men, who in Scripture are often called fools or insane (Ps 14<sup>1</sup>, Mt 7<sup>26</sup>, Lk 12<sup>20</sup>, Tit 3<sup>3</sup>, 1 P 2<sup>15</sup>); folly is only a few degrees remote from a complete extinction of the intellect. In 1 Cor 15<sup>53</sup> it is not *corruption* but what is *corruptible* (τὸ φθαρτὸν not φθορά) which is to put on *incorruption* (p. 143).

The quotations made in your reply to Dr. Weymouth (Note P) are also figurative. The loss of money is very often killing for a worldly man, it may actually shorten his days; indeed, in despair, he may put an end to his own life. A converse image is used by the man who entreats a favour: 'It would be the making of me,' he says.

In every instance that you adduce, *the cessation of one existence or another is kept in view*. Your array of quotations is a skein which is easily unwound when begun at the right end of the thread, I mean with an appropriate definition of the words under examination.

Please consider, also, that if these words were not susceptible occasionally of a full and unrestricted meaning, we should look in vain, at least in colloquial Greek, for terms expressing the ideas of coming or bringing to nought. Even Plato, a philosopher, when he wishes to deny the possible annihilation of the human soul, is compelled to use, with the negative, the very words which you think too weak for the purpose. You object that he then takes care to accumulate synonyms, but

this accumulation would prove ineffective if each synonym had not by itself an unrestricted meaning. The idea of a century, for instance, cannot be suggested by simply adding together six months and half a year. No, the occasional accumulation is merely pleonastic, as when we say, 'I have seen it with my own eyes,' or 'have touched it with my own hands.' It is an emphatic but legitimate figure of speech.

Apart from the figurative and restricted senses of the Greek words for *destruction*, there are undeniably in the New Testament passages where the same terms intimate *bringing to an end* as the proper, effective, and unrestricted sense. Ja 1<sup>11</sup> is one of those passages; when 'the flower falleth, the grace of the fashion of it perisheth,' the meaning evidently is that it ends for ever. The material 'meat which perisheth' (Jn 6<sup>27</sup>) also ceases to exist, and Jesus uses the same expression when speaking of the right eye and of the right hand which 'should perish' in order to prevent the whole body being 'cast into hell' (Mt 5<sup>20, 30</sup>). The eye which has been plucked out and the hand which has been cut off must soon undergo disintegration and come to an end. The fate of the whole body cast into hell is assimilated by Jesus to the fate of its severed members. Hell, in the original Greek, is *Gehenna*, and we find, in the same Gospel, that 'both soul and body' may be 'destroyed in Gehenna' (Mt 10<sup>28</sup>), the soul being here expressly spoken of as sharing a fate similar to that which brings to nought the detached portion of a living body. A sort of disintegration is also alluded to in Lk 20<sup>18</sup>; surely you must admit that the 'grinding to powder,' or (R.V.) 'scattering as dust' (λικμήσει), is to be taken figuratively and applied to the invisible part of man, 'whether,' as you put it, 'in its nature it be composite or un-compounded' (p. 217).

Do not these metaphors of *putrefaction* and *pulverization* confirm the one taken from 'the burning of vegetable matter'? Do they not 'come as near to annihilation as do any natural phenomena' (pp. 163, 282)? Are they not 'hints,' too, that the unsaved will cease to be (p. 164)? I would further submit to your kind consideration the pages I have written concerning what may be called the favourite maxim of Jesus; a close exegesis will show, I believe, that it points in the same direction (*Problem*, pp. 127-134). The phrase

'eternal destruction' (ἄλεθρος αἰώνιος, 2 Th 1<sup>9</sup>) is emphatic and slightly pleonastic in order to accentuate the idea of an abiding and endless result, an unrestricted destruction. It is therefore a perfect synonym of our dialectical word *annihilation*, and this seems to be substantially your own interpretation (p. 126).

The idea of complete disintegration is conveyed, also, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, by the 'fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries,' (10<sup>27</sup>, cf. 12<sup>29</sup>, ἐσθίω, καταναλίσκω). This image of consuming fire occurs very often in the New Testament. What the fire devours must apparently lose its existence; the fire is sometimes called eternal on account of its 'abiding result,' in accordance with your own admission concerning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7; p. 121, cf. 122). In the Book of Revelation, the annihilation of obstinate sinners is mainly symbolized by the lake burning with fire and brimstone. The key to this emblem is to be found in chap. 20<sup>14</sup>, where it is evidently the abolition of *Death* and *Hades* which is depicted; suffering being out of the question in their case. It should be remembered that Hades is thus brought to an end *after* having been emptied of its inhabitants. The annihilating power of the lake is therefore undeniable, and this power must be exerted over every being cast into it. Should it be objected that in 14<sup>10</sup> there are human beings who are tormented with fire and brimstone, I reply that these torments may be *preliminary* to ultimate and unavoidable annihilation. This is the only way in which justice can be done to all the factors in the context. As to the statement (20<sup>10</sup>), about the Devil and the two Beasts (cf. chaps. 13<sup>11-13</sup> 16<sup>13</sup> 19<sup>20</sup>, also Dn 7<sup>7-8-11</sup>), that they are to be tormented 'for ever and ever,' human beings are not there alluded to, and the expression is no doubt hyperbolic, like many others in this highly poetical book. (See *Problem*, p. 572, note 3.)

It did not enter into your programme to take into consideration the Old Testament, probably because its declarations did not appear to you sufficiently authoritative on the subject. It is Jesus who has 'brought life and immortality to light through the gospel' (2 Ti 1<sup>10</sup>). The gospel, however, has its roots in the Old Testament, and it is interesting to find in the latter the germs of

what is called *Conditionalism*, but should rather be named an unadulterated gospel. In the Hebrew language there are more than fifty verbs which are used either habitually or occasionally to signify the destruction of organic beings. Most of these are employed in the Old Testament to specify the ultimate fate of the impenitent, and convey the idea of the complete suppression of the individuals of whom they are predicated. The New Testament sanctions the terms which serve to represent the corresponding Hebrew words in the Greek of the LXX. It adopts the symbols of the Old Covenant in order to describe eternal realities. Thus the biblical doctrine is, as it were, clenched. In both Testaments the wicked are said to be 'destroyed for ever,' *i.e.* put out of existence, but the vague and indefinite eternity of the Old Covenant becomes definite and absolute in the New. (See in *The Problem of Immortality*, pp. 445 ff., a 'List of Biblical Terms used to denote Destruction.')

To return to the New Testament, *death* is the crucial word to denote the supreme punishment of the desperately wicked;<sup>1</sup> it is of more frequent occurrence than the words for *destruction*, and is used κατ' ἐξοχήν. In every language lexicons agree in defining death as the cessation of life. Life can be summarily described as the combination in an individual being of the two powers of sensation and action;<sup>2</sup> death, therefore, when it is complete, puts an end to this twofold power. But here again, as for the word *destruction*, death may be complete or only partial, as in the case of paralysis. There is for man a physical and a spiritual death. From a figurative point of view, the death may be proleptic or putative. At last comes the second or absolute death, whereof the physical and spiritual death are only forerunners. I have taken into minute consideration every passage of the Bible in which the words relating to death occur, and have classified these passages, as you may see in *The Problem of Immortality*

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting and instructive to extend our investigation, did space permit, to the whole family of words relative to the idea of death; θνήσκω, ἀποθνήσκω, θάνατος, θανατώω, νεκρός, νεκρῶω, νέκρωσις, σταυρώω, ἀναιρέω, ἀποκτείνω, φονεύω, κατασφάζω, etc.

<sup>2</sup> In one of the supplements of the original French edition of *The Problem of Immortality*, I have tried to give a more minute and scientific definition of life, thus: 'A current of molecules passing through an organized body, this body constantly renewing itself in all its parts from within outwards.'

(pp. 206-215). So far as I know, no exception has been taken to my distinctions.

When the Apostle Paul declares that 'the wages of sin is death' (Ro 6<sup>23</sup>), the meaning is absolutely unrestricted and exhaustive. Just as the physical death puts an end to all the sensations and all the activities of the body, the perseverance in sin will ultimately put an end to all the feelings and all the activities of both soul and body. The physical life has no more any *existence* if its feelings and activities have absolutely ceased; in a similar manner, the life of a soul will *exist no more* when the second death shall have put an end to all its energies. In a state of catalepsy, physical or spiritual, there is still life, although it is reduced to a minimum; it is only apparent or putative death.

Spiritual death may be cataleptic; it becomes absolute when the soul has finally and absolutely ceased to feel and to act. Most conditionalists do not believe in the 'immediate annihilation' mentioned by you (pp. 151, 154). The spiritual death is, to my mind, gradual, as physical death generally is. The reprobates live a dying life, and this explains why their lingering existence beyond the grave is never called life (p. 146); the real life (*ἡ θνρωσ ζωῆ, 1 Ti 6<sup>19</sup>*) is eternal.

You consider that the writers of the New Testament, when speaking of the supreme punishment of unsaved sinners, 'do not define in unmistakable language what their fate will be' (p. 305). But the investigation which we have just made shows, on the contrary, that the fate threatened is perfectly clear and distinct, as clear as the simple and primordial notions of to be or not to be, as distinct as the sentence of penal law which condemns a man to capital punishment, or as the prediction that a wooden house will be destroyed by fire. Have you the conception of an idea more definite than this? If not, you must needs acknowledge that the language of the New Testament on the point at issue is truly 'unmistakable,' and that it *does* teach a punishment 'which logically implies that the acute suffering of the lost will come to an end' (p. 226).

I readily confess that the phrase 'Conditional immortality' is not biblical, but neither is the phrase the *Divinity of Christ*, nor are the words *Providence, Trinity, Christianity, Second Advent*, etc. The coining of the word *Conditionalism* has been necessitated by the fact that the ontological

meaning of *Life in Christ* had been lost sight of in the traditional interpretation.

As already stated, there are many points of agreement in our eschatological views. You believe that various traditional interpretations of the Bible on this subject are 'condemned by the moral sense of man' (p. 103), and that 'the moral sense' of man is a voice of God (p. 208); that the doctrine of eternal torment is placed 'in a solitary depth of improbability, or apparent impossibility' (p. 209); that 'the word life is never once used throughout the New Testament to describe the future state of the lost' (p. 146); that there are metaphors in the teaching of Jesus which seem to 'hint' that the unsaved may one day 'cease to be' (pp. 163, 164, 282); that 'since not all punishment is suffering, we have no right to infer that suffering and punishment are coextensive' (p. 174); that 'extinction is infinite loss' (p. 269); that the punishment is 'final' and 'hopeless' (p. 126); that the teaching and phraseology of Plato 'have been a source of endless confusion and misapprehension in Christian theology' (p. 197); that the Bible 'never asserts or assumes the essential and endless permanence' of the human soul (p. 199); that 'the Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul is derived only from Greek philosophy' (p. 200), having 'no place in the Bible and no adequate evidence elsewhere' (p. 205). On the basis of these propositions, you strenuously oppose the universalist views (pp. 125, 213, 214, 288), and you concede that, from a speculative point of view, at least, 'no serious objection can be brought' against the conditionalist theory—it would be, as you say, 'punishment tempered with mercy' (p. 217), 'and it permits us to look forward to a time when from the entire universe, sin and sorrow will have alike vanished. The relief thus afforded, and the prospect thus opened, give to this theory a certain attractiveness' (p. 218).

Evidently, like Mr. Gladstone, in his admirable essay on *A Future Life*, you approach very near to conditionalism. Your last objections seemed to rest upon a misunderstanding which may now have been removed. Of course, I am open to the reception of further light; meantime, I feel convinced that, *logically*, your present intermediate position is *à priori* and *à posteriori* indefensible.

Before concluding, allow me to address myself



to your heart. Being here by medical advice, I have made this earnest effort in response to your expressed desire, and as part of a campaign which I began thirty-four years ago. Amidst difficulties and hindrances, I have been constantly cheered by the deep and ever-growing assurance that this undertaking was for the glory of God, and I have carried it on in order that He might be better understood. I see with sorrow that His character is too generally misrepresented in relation to this matter, and that much of the prevailing infidelity is due to that fact. As to believers themselves, I grieve to find that the reflection of a falsified dogma has had a hardening effect upon their feelings, and also that they are not, as they should be, joyful, nor grateful to Jesus Christ for the preservation of their very life and existence, but only for secondary gifts. They seem to forget that He has called himself the 'Bread of Life,' the 'Water of Life,' which are symbols, not of enjoyment nor even of holiness, but of ontological maintenance and support. This serious mistake of most Christians is derogatory to the divinity of Christ, which would be confirmed and placed upon

a much higher level if it were recognized that Jesus, in His union with God, is really the great life-giver, and that apart from Him there is no permanent existence of any kind for any man.

I am not pretending that a reformed eschatology is indispensable for personal salvation, but I believe it to be none the less urgently needed, in view of a more successful advocacy and propagation of the Christian faith, indeed indispensable for that purpose; the lack of it may account for the comparative failure of so many zealous evangelistic endeavours, and I fear that an interdict will remain upon the Churches at large until they have honestly confessed a secular error (Ro 1<sup>18</sup>).

In England, unfortunately, there are at present only a few leaders of this much-needed crusade. If only you might become one of them! I cannot conceive of a more honourable and timely mission, neither do I know of a servant of God better fitted than yourself to carry it on effectively. Would to God that you could take *one step further!*—Believe me to remain, Rev. and dear Sir, with best Christian regards, very sincerely yours,

E. PETAVEL.

## At the Literary Table.

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