

LECTURE LXXII.

NATURE AND DURATION OF HELL-TORMENTS.

SYLLABUS.

1. In what will the torments of the wicked consist?
Turretin, Loc. xx, Qu. 7. Ridgley, Qu. 89. Knapp, § 156.
2. State the various opinions which have prevailed as to the duration of these pains. Which now most prevalent among Universalists?
Turretin as above. Knapp, § 156-158. Debate between Rice and Pingree.
3. State and refute the usual objections against everlasting punishments, from God's wisdom, mercy, benevolence, &c.
Knapp as above. Rice and Pingree.
4. What is the proper force in the Scriptures of the original words which state the duration of these torments?
Knapp, § 157. De Quincey's Essays.
5. Prove the everlasting duration of these torments from the sinner's perpetual sinfulness; from the Scriptural terms, redemption, pardon, salvation, &c.; from Universal relation in Providence between conduct and destiny; from the existence of condemned angels; from the Resurrection; from temporal judgments of God on the wicked, as Sodom, &c.; from the justice of God and the unequal distribution of rewards here.
Same authorities.

THE just reward of ill-desert is suffering. The Judgment results in a curse upon the impenitent, which dooms them, as none doubt, to some form of suffering.

1. **Natural Penalties.** Theologians divide the pains which are thus

adjudged to the condemned, into natural, and positive. The former are those which proceed from the natural working of their own evil principles, of themselves, and according to natural law; such pains as are foreshadowed in Is. iii: 11; Gal. vi: 8; Jas. i: 15. These natural penalties consist of the loss or privation of eternal happiness, which only faith, repentance, and holiness can procure; of the remorse, self-accusation, and despair, which the soul will inflict on itself for its own folly and sin; of all the disorders, inward and social, of inordinate and malignant emotions; and as is most probable, at least, of the stings of carnal, sensual, and sinful desires deprived of all their earthly *pabulum*. As to this last, it appears most consistent to limit what is said, (1 Cor. xv: 45—end) of the spirituality and blessedness of the resurrection body, to the saints. The reprobate will rise again; but as they never were savingly united to Christ, they will never “bear the image of the heavenly” Adam. Hence, we naturally and reasonably anticipate, that their bodies, while immortal, will not share the glory and purification of the bodies of the Redeemed, but will still be animal bodies, having the appetites and wants of such. But earthly supplies therefor will be forever lacking. Hence, they will be a prey to perpetual cravings unsatisfied.

The positive penalties of sin will be such as God will Himself add, by new dispensations of His power, to inflict anguish on His enemies. The Scriptures always represent Him as arising to avenge Himself, as “pouring out His wrath” upon His enemies; and in such like, and a multitude of other expressions, whatever may be their figurative character, we cannot fail to see this truth, that God puts forth new and direct power, to inflict pain. The stupidity and obstinacy of many sinners, obviously, would be restrained by nothing less than the fear of these positive penalties. The mere natural penalties would appear to them wholly illusory, or trivial. Indeed, most sinners are so well pleased with their carnal affections, that they would rather declare themselves glad to accept, and even cherish, their merely natural fruits.

These positive penalties undoubtedly will include, when the body is raised, some corporeal pains, and perhaps, consist chiefly in them; else, why need the body be raised? And there is too obvious a propriety in God’s punishing sinners through those members which they have perverted into “members of unrighteousness,” for us to imagine for a moment, that He will omit it. Once more; the imagery by which the punishments of the wicked are represented, however interpreted, is so uniform, as to make it impossible to suppose the bodies of the wicked are exempted. But whether their bodies will be burned with literal fire and sulphur, does not appear so certain. In Matt. xxv,

Will They Afflict
the Body!

the fire into which they depart is said to have been prepared from the foundation of the world, for the Devil and his angels. They are, and will always remain, incorporeal beings; and it does not seem probable that literal fire is the instrument which God has devised expressly for their torment. Some weight may also be given to this thought; that other adjuncts, as the darkness, the gnawing worm, the brimstone, the smoke, &c., seem to be images adopted from human tortures and earthly scenes of anguish. Hence the conclusion to which Turretin comes; that this is all imagery. But, however that may be, the images must be interpreted according to plain rules of right rhetoric. Interpret it as we may, we cannot get anything less from it than this: that sin will be punished with extreme and terrible bodily torments, as well as with natural pains.

Those who deny the eternity of future punishments may be divided into three classes. First are those who resolve the punishment of the wicked into annihilation. They believe accordingly, that only the redeemed enjoy a resurrection. Second are the ancient and modern Restorationists, who hold to future punishments, longer or shorter, according to men's guilt; but who suppose that each man's repentance will be accepted after his penal debt is paid; so that at length, perhaps after a long interval, all will be saved. It is said that the Originists believed that Satan and his angels would also be at last saved. The third opinion is that which is now widely prevalent among modern Universalists. This supposes, that the external and internal sufferings which each soul experiences during this life, and *in articulo mortis*, will satisfy all the essential demands of the divine justice against its sins: and that there will, accordingly, be no future punishments. At death, they suppose, those not already penitent and holy, will be summarily sanctified by God, in His universal mercy through Christ, and at once received into heaven forever. This scheme is the baldest and most extreme of all the forms of Universalism, and stands in most complete opposition to Scripture. My arguments will therefore have a special reference to it.

To clear the way, the Annihilationist may be easily refuted, by all those passages which speak of future punishment, even though we grant it not eternal. Such are Mark ix: 44, 46; Matt. xxv, &c. The resurrection extends to the wicked, as well as the righteous (Dan. xii: 2; John v: 28, 29). Nor does the quibble avail, that the phrase, "everlasting destruction," or such-like, implies annihilation. If this consisted in reducing the sinner forever to nothing, it would be instant destruction, not everlasting. How can punishment continue, when the subject of it has ceased to exist? But it may be well to clear away obstructions, by refuting

2. Eternal Punishments denied. 1. By Annihilationists. 2. Restorationists. 3. Universalists.

First Class Refuted.

3. God's Love Consists With Eternal Punishments. the general grounds on which the eternity of future punishments is denied. The most common of these is that construction of the text, "God is Love," which makes Him pure benevolence, denying to Him all other moral attributes, and resolving them into phases of benevolence. But we reply; other texts say, "God is Light;" "Our God is a consuming Fire." Is He nothing but pure intelligence? Is He nothing but punitive justice? We see the absurd contradictions into which such a mode of interpretation would lead us. Infinite benevolence, intelligence, justice, and truth are co-ordinate and consistent attributes, acting harmoniously. That God is not benevolent in such a sense as to exclude punitive justice, is proved thus: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x: 31. See also, 2 Cor. v: 11; Ps. lxxvi: 5. Again; God is not too benevolent to punish devils, once His holy children, eternally (See Rev. xx: 10). Nor can this ruinous fact be evaded by denying the personality of the devils; the usual resort of the Universalists. The marks of the real personality of devils are as clear as for Judas Iscariot's.

It is equally vain to appeal to the paternal benevolence of a father, claiming that God is more tender, and to ask whether any earthly parent is capable of tormenting his own child, however erring, with endless fire. The answer is in such passages as Ps. l: 21. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself, but I will rebuke thee," (Is. lv: 8,) and by the stubborn fact, that this "God of Love" does punish a sinful world, under our eyes, with continual woes, many of them gigantic. How are these dealings to be reconciled with God's benevolence? By the sufferer's guilt. Then, if the guilt of any is endless, the benevolence of God may permit them to suffer endlessly. Even if we accept the erroneous parallel to a human parent as exact, we may ask: Would a benevolent, wise, and just parent so spare an incorrigibly wicked son, as to sacrifice the order of his house, and the rights of the good children to his impunity? This argument is sometimes put in this form: "We are commanded to be like God. We are also commanded to forgive and love our enemies. But if we were like the Calvinists' God, we must hate and damn our enemies." The replies are, that God is also a magistrate; and that human magistrates are strictly required to condemn the wicked; that we are under no circumstances required to pardon and love enemies, at the expense of justice and truth; that we are only required to restore the injurious enemy to our confidence and esteem, when he repents; the one great reason why we are enjoined not to revenge ourselves, is that "vengeance is God's; He will repay;" and that God does exhibit an infinite forbearance towards His enemies, by giving His own Son to die for their reconciliation

God not to be Measured by Men.

on the terms of faith and repentance ; the only terms consistent with His perfections.

The attempt to argue, that God's wisdom would forbid Him to create immortal beings, and then permit them to forfeit the ends of their existence, is exceedingly weak and presumptuous. Before the argument can apply, it must be determined what is God's secret purpose as to the ultimate end of their existence. He must suppose himself omniscient, who imagines himself competent to decide.

One would think that the declarations of the Scriptures about eternal punishments were clear enough to decide the debate. But you are aware that the words used in the Scriptures for everlasting, eternal, &c., are said to mean also an "age," a "dispensation," a finite duration ; and that we hear of the everlasting hills, and the covenant with David's house as eternal as the sun ; whereas we are told elsewhere, that the hills shall melt, and the sun be darkened, as David's dynasty has perished.

But these words are as strong as any the Greek language affords. (Aristotle, *αἰώνιος* from *αἰς ἄν*). They are the same words which are used to express the eternity of God. If they have a secondary and limited meaning in some applications, the subject and context should be appealed to, in order to settle the sense. Now, when these words are used to describe a state, they always express one as long as the nature of the subject to which they are applied can permit. When, e. g., the hills are called everlasting, it is evidently meant, that they will endure as long as the earth on which they rest. Now if "everlasting torment" is said to be the state of a sinful soul, those who believe the soul immortal are bound to understand by it a duration of the punishment coeval with that of the sufferer's being. See thus Rev. xiv : 11 ; xx : 10 ; with xxii : 5 ; 2 Thess. i : 9 ; Mark iii : 29 ; Matt. xviii : 8. The conclusive fact is, that in Matt. xxv : 46, the same word describes the duration of the saint's bliss and the sinner's penalty. If the latter is not properly unending, the former is not.

But more than this : Many texts convey the idea that the torments of sinners will never end, in terms and modes to which this quibble cannot attach. Thus, the state of men after death is changeless ; and when the state of it is fixed at death, nothing more can be done to modify it : Eccles. ix : 10 ; John ix : 4 ; Eccles. xi : 3. Then it is asserted that "their worm dieth not." "The fire is not quenched." Mark ix : 43-47 ; John iii : 3 and 36 ; Luke xvi : 26 ; Rev. xxi : 8. Compared with verses 1 and 4, Rev. xxii : 11, 12.

But the strength of our argument is, that to teach the

God's Wisdom Consists with Eternal Punishments.

4. Scriptural Terms Considered.

Eternal Torments taught in other Terms.

5. Universalists Contradict whole Scripture; as Satan's Personality.— Man's Probation. limited duration of the punishment of sin, Universalists and Restorationists have to contradict nearly every fact and doctrine of the Bible. We have seen how they are compelled by their dogma to deny the personality of Satan. The Scriptures bear upon their very face this truth, that man must fulfill some condition in order to secure his destiny. Let that faith on which salvation turns be what it may, it is a something the doing or not doing of which decides the soul's state in different ways. See e. g., Mark xvi : 16, as one of a thousand places. But if the Universalist is true, he who believes and he who believes not, will fare precisely alike. And here I may add that powerful analogical argument; that under the observed course of God's providence, men are never treated alike irrespective of their doings and exertions; conduct always influences destiny. But if the Universalist is true, the other world will be in contradiction to this.

Again: if either the Universalist or Restorationist is true, there is no grace, no pardon, no redemption, &c., nor Satisfaction by Christ. and no salvation. For according to both, all the guilt men contract is paid for; according to the one party, in temporal sufferings on earth; according to the other, in temporary sufferings beyond the grave. Now that which is paid for by the sinner himself is not remitted to him. There is no pardon or mercy. Nor can it be said that there is any salvation. For the only evils to which the sinner is at any time liable, he meets and endures to the full. None are escaped; there is no deliverance; no salvation. So we may charge, that their doctrines are inconsistent with that of Christ's satisfaction or atonement. For of course, if each sinner bears his own guilt, there is no need of a substitute to bear it. Hence we find the advocates of these schemes explaining away the vicarious satisfaction of Christ.

Indeed, it may justly be added, that the tendency of their system is to depreciate the authority of the Universalists Skeptical. Word, to deny its plenary inspiration, to question its teachings with irreverent license, and to disclose much closer affinities with infidelity than with humble faith. This charge is fully sustained by the history of Universalist churches (so called) and of their teachers and councils. Finally, passing over for the time, the unanswerable argument, that sin has infinite ill desert, as committed against an excellent, perfect and universal law, and an infinite lawgiver, I may argue that even though the desert of a temporary season of sinning were only temporary penalties, yet if man continues in hell to sin forever, he will continue to suffer forever. While he was paying off a previous debt of guilt he would contract an additional one, and so be forever subject to penalty.

An attempt is made to argue universal salvation from a

Their Proof-texts Considered.

few passages represented by Rom. v : 18, and I Cor. xv : 22, in which the word "all," is used. I reply, 1st, that those who use this argument do not believe that "all," or any "come into condemnation" by Adam's sin, or "die in Adam;" and they have no right to argue thence that they will be saved in Christ. They cannot contradict me when I charge them with flatly denying the imputation of Adam's guilt to any of his posterity. I reply, 2d, that the word "all" is, notoriously, used in the Scripture when it often does not mean actual universality; but only all of a certain class; Matt. iii : 5; Mark i : 37. So, in these texts, the meaning obviously is, that as in Adam all are condemned, all die, who are federally connected with him, so, in Christ, all savingly connected with Him are made alive. See the context. The very chapter which says, "The free gift came upon all," &c., begins by saying that being "justified by faith," we have peace with God. It must be then that the free gift comes upon "all" that believe. So I Cor. xv : 22, is immediately followed by these words: "But every man in his own order, Christ the first fruits; afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming." Obviously, it is "all" who are Christ's, who are made alive in Him. But let the Scripture tell us who are Christ's. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." There is this answer also, to the Universalist, quoting I Cor. xv : 22, that, apply it to whom we will, it teaches after all, not future blessedness, but the resurrection of the body.

This doctrine of the Resurrection also suggests an argument against Universalism, because it is most clearly taught that there are two resurrections; one for the just and one for the unjust; one desirable, and one dreadful; one for which holy men of old strove, and one which they shunned. But if all at the resurrection were renewed and saved, there would be but one resurrection. The passage quoted from Jno. v : 29, settles that point. For it cannot be evaded by the figment of a metaphorical resurrection, i. e., a conversion in this life, because of this Christ had thus been speaking in verses 25 to 27. It is in contrast with this, that He then sets the real, material resurrection before us, in verses 28, &c. Moreover, if the resurrection be made a metaphorical one, then in verse 29, we should have the good, in common with the wicked, coming out of that state of depravity and ruin, represented by the "graves" of verses 25, 26. (See also, Phil. iii : 11; Heb. xi : 35).

If the modern Universalist scheme is true, then the only thing which prevents this life from being an unmingled curse, and death a natural good, is the pain of parting and dissolution. If these were evaded by a quick and easy death, it would be an immeasurable benefit; a step to an assured blissful state, from one both

Death Would Not be a Judgment to Sinners.

sinful and unhappy. The most fortunate life here is almost worthless, compared with heaven. Hence, when one is suddenly taken from this life, it is not a penalty, but a favour. We must contradict all that the Scriptures teach, of sudden deaths being a judgment of God against sinners. The antediluvians were gloriously distinguished from Noah, by being illustriously rewarded for their sins by a sudden and summary introduction to holiness and happiness; while he was punished for his piety, by being condemned to many hundreds of years of suffering, including all the horrors of his watery imprisonment. So, the Sodomites were rewarded for their sins, while Lot was punished by his piety. The cruel Egyptians were swept into glory on the waters of the Red Sea, while Moses was punished for his obedience by a tiresome pilgrimage of forty years.

Again: the assertion that each man's temporal sufferings in this life, and in *articulo mortis*, are a just recompense for his sins, is false. Scripture and observation deny it; the former in Ps. lxxii : 2, 14; Luke xvi : 25, and similiar passages; the latter in the numerous instances seen by every experienced person, where the humble, pure, retired, prayerful Christian spends years in pain, sickness, and poverty; while the sturdy rake or covetous man revels in the sensual joys or gains which he prefers, and then dies a painless and sudden death. In short, the facts are so plainly against this theory, that the notorious inequality of deserts and rewards in this life has furnished to every reflecting mind, both pagan and Christian, one of the strongest evidences in favour of future rewards and punishments.

In this connection I would argue also, that on the modern Universal scheme, God would often be odiously unjust. But see Ps. lxxxix : 14; Gen. xviii : 25; Rom. ii : 6, &c. Now our adversaries stoutly deny that any guilt is imputed to Christ and punished in Him. Hence, the flagrant inequality remains, according to them, forever uncompensated. The vilest and the purest would receive the same rewards, nay, in many cases, the advantage would be against the good; Providence would often reward vice and punish virtue. For, if the monster of sin is at death renewed and carried immediately to heaven, just as is the saint, thenceforward they are equal; but before the sinner had the advantage. While holy Paul was wearing out a painful life in efforts to do good, many a sensualist, like his persecutor Nero, was floating in his preferred enjoyments. Both died violent and sudden deaths; and then, as they met in the world of spirits, the monster receives the same destiny with the saint. So every one of even a short experience, can recall instances somewhat similar, which have fallen under his own observation.

I can recall a pair of such persons, whose history may

Sins Are Not Ade-
quately Re-quired.
here.

God Would There-
fore be Partial.

Instances. illustrate both my last arguments. Their lives and deaths were nearly cotemporary, and I was acquainted with the history of both. The one was a Christian female, in whom a refined and noble disposition, sanctified by grace, presented one of the most beautiful examples of virtue which this world can often see. She united early and long-tried piety, moral courage, generosity, self-devotion, with the most feminine refinement of tastes, charity and tenderness. There was a high frame of devotion without a shade of austerity; there was the courage of a martyr, without a tinge of harshness. She combined the most rigid economy towards herself with the most liberal benefactions. For many years, she denied herself the indulgence of her elegant tastes, except such as nature offered without expense in the beauties of flower, and forest, and landscape, in order that she might husband the proceeds of a moderate competency for the needy, for the suffering, and for God. Her days were passed in a pure retirement, far from the strifes and corruptions of the world. Her house was the unfailing refuge of the sick and the unfortunate among her kindred and the poor; her life was little else than a long and painful ministration to their calamities; and more than once she had flown, with a moral heroism which astonished her friends, into the midst of pestilence, to be the ministering angel at the solitary couch of her suffering relatives. Never did neglect cause her devotion to flag, and never did reproach or injury wring from her a word or deed of retaliation, although she received not a little of both, even from those whom she strove to bless. Such was her life to the last.

And now let us look at her earthly reward. Her whole life was spent in uncertain, or in feeble health. It was often her lot to have her kindness misunderstood, and her sensitive affections lacerated. She scarcely tasted earthly luxuries or ease; for she lived for others. At length, three years before her death, she was overtaken by that most agonizing and incurable of all the scourges which afflict humanity, cancer. For three long years her sufferings grew, and with them her patience. The most painful remedies were endured in vain. The last weeks of her life were spent in utter prostration, and unceasing agony, so strong that her nurses declared themselves amazed and affrighted to see a nature so frail as man's bearing such a load of anguish. A peculiarity of constitution deprived her even of that poor resource of suffering, the insensibility of opiates. Up to the very last hour of death, there was no respite; without one moment of relaxation in the agony, to commend her soul to her Saviour; maddened by unbearable pangs; crying like her dying Redeemer, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me," she approached the river of death, and its waters were not assuaged to ease her passage.

Now for the contrast. During nearly the same period, and

in an adjoining county, there lived a man, who embodied as many repulsive qualities as it has ever been my lot to see in one human breast. His dark, suspicious eye, and malignant countenance gave fit expression to the soul within. Licentious, a drunkard, devoid of natural affection, dishonest, quarrelsome, litigious, a terror to his neighbors, he was soiled with dark suspicion of murder. He revelled in robust health; and as far as human eye could see, his soul was steeped in ignorance and sensuality, and his conscience seared as with heated iron. He was successful in escaping the clutches of the law, and seemed to live in the enjoyment of his preferred indulgences. At length this man, at the monthly court of his county, retired to a chamber in the second story of the tavern, drunk, as was his wont, and lay down to sleep. The next morning, he was found under the window, stone dead, and with a broken neck. Whether he had walked in his sleep, or the hand of revenge had thrust him out, was never known. In all probability he never knew what killed him, and went into the other world without tasting a single pang, either in body or soul, of the sorrows of dissolution.

Now let us suppose that these two persons, appearing so nearly at the same time in the presence of God, were together introduced into the same heaven. Where is the equality between their deserts and their rewards? On the whole, the providential difference was in favour of the most guilty. If this is God's justice, then is He more fearful than blind chance, than the Prince of Darkness himself. To believe our everlasting destiny is in the hand of such unprincipled omnipotence, is more horrible than to dwell on the deceitful crust of a volcano. And if heaven consists in dwelling in His presence, it can have no attractions for the righteous soul.

In conclusion; whether Universalism be true or false, it is absurdity to teach it. If it turns out true, no one will have lost his soul for not learning it. If it turns out false, every one who has embraced it thereby will incur an immense and irreparable evil. Hence, though the probabilities of its truth were as a million to one, it would be madness and cruelty to teach it.

But, apart from all argument, what should a right-minded man infer from the fact, that of all intelligent and honest students of the Scriptures, scarcely one in a million has found the doctrine of universal salvation in them.

The chief practical argument in favor of Universalism is, doubtless, the sinful callousness of Christians towards this tremendous destiny of their sinful fellow-creatures. Can we contemplate the exposure of our friends, neighbours, and children to a fate so terrible, and feel so little sensibility, and make efforts so few

Can Justice Make These Equal?

Universalism has no Motive for Propagating it.

Its Chief Pretext is Insensibility of Believers.

and weak for their deliverance! And yet, we profess to have faith! How can our unbelieving friends be made to credit the sincerity of our convictions? Here, doubtless, is the best argument of Satan, for their skepticism. And the best refutation of this heresy is the exhibition by God's people of a holy, tender, humble, yet burning zeal to pluck men as brands from the burning.