

MR. MAURICE'S
LETTER TO DR. JELF.

THE WORD "ETERNAL,"

AND

THE PUNISHMENT OF THE WICKED :

A Letter

TO THE REV. DR. JELF, CANON OF CHRIST CHURCH, AND
PRINCIPLE OF KING'S COLLEGE.

BY

FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE,
CHAPLAIN OF LINCOLN'S INN.

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EARLY in last July the Principal of King's College wrote to me, desiring an explanation of some sentiments on the subject of Eternal Punishment or Death which I had recently put forth in a volume of "Theological Essays." This letter led to a correspondence. In August, the Principal informed me, that as he was not at all satisfied with my explanations, he should draw up a statement of his reasons for thinking that I was not fit to be a teacher in the College. This statement, he said, would be addressed to me as his former letters had been.

At a meeting of the Council of King's College on Friday, October 14, the Principal laid this correspondence before them. As the Principal's final letter had been sent to me in fragments while he was printing it, I was able to prepare an answer which I laid before the same meeting.

After the question respecting me had been considered (at an adjourned meeting of the Council on October 28), the Principal consented to publish the documents on which he had called for a judgment against me. He informs me that they will appear, with some foot-notes, in the course of this week. I now publish my answer as I sent it to the Council: I also have added some notes; but they have no reference to those of the Principal, which I have not seen, or asked to see.

In drawing up this letter I considered that I was answering an indictment. I felt all the inconvenience and awkwardness of addressing my reply to my accuser and not to my judges, but the Principal chose that course, and I was obliged to adopt it. If I had affected the deference which I hope I have not failed to show to him while I was acting as his subordinate in the College,—if I had not claimed a right, as a theological teacher, to answer his theological arguments,—I must have left a cause undefended which I believe is not mine, but that of thousands.

The Council has pronounced that the opinions expressed and the doubts indicated in my Essays and in my correspondence respecting future punishments and the final issues of the day of judgment are of dangerous tendency, and likely to unsettle the minds of the theological students. They have decided further, that my continuance as Professor would be seriously detrimental to the interests of the College. The Principal, acting as interpreter of the mind of the Council, has decreed, that from the day on which its meeting was held, my Lectures, in both departments of the College, should cease.

The steps which it may be right for me to take in consequence of these resolutions do not concern the readers of this pamphlet. I earnestly trust that no personal feelings, favourable or unfavourable to me, will interfere with their solemn consideration of the questions discussed in it.

21, Queen Square, Bloomsbury:
Nov. 8, 1853.

ADVERTISEMENT
TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SINCE this Letter was published, I have addressed the following to the Council of King's College:—

21 Queen Square, Bloomsbury:
November 7th, 1853.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE received from the Secretary of King's College a copy of certain Resolutions respecting me which were adopted at the last meeting of the Council.

Under ordinary circumstances it would be my duty at once to resign offices which the legislative body of the College has declared that I cannot hold without serious detriment to its usefulness.

But the Council is aware, and the Public is now also aware, that certain definite charges have been brought against me by the Principal, upon the strength of which he asked that I should be excluded from my Professorship. These charges amounted to a declaration that I had departed from the orthodox faith. He alleged, as his reasons for this grave charge, that I did not accept a meaning of the word *Eternal* which he considered to be the only right one, and that I refused to draw certain consequences from that meaning, or to pronounce an opinion upon a subject on which the Articles of the Church of England have not pronounced one.

The decision of the Council, as it avowedly takes cognisance of the opinions which I expressed on this subject in my "Theological Essays" and in my correspondence with the Principal, can be understood to amount to nothing less than a condemnation of me upon the grounds which are expressed in the Principal's Letter. The Council must be deemed to have accepted the propositions in that Letter, and to require that all its Professors should accept them likewise.

The Principal evidently shares in this opinion. When I wrote to inquire whether my Lectures were to be continued till my successors were appointed, he answered that I had better discontinue them from the day on which the Resolutions of the Council were passed. He pronounced his decision though he had officially commanded me to be present at the opening of the Term and to commence my usual Courses, retracting an unofficial letter in

which he had recommended me to ask for leave of absence. I submit that a person ordinarily so courteous to the Professors of the College, and so tender of the interests of the Students, would not have thus summarily suspended a Teacher whom, with a full knowledge of his opinions, he had invited to be a Lecturer in the Theological Department, and who had served the College in the other Department for thirteen years,—that he would not have interrupted the studies of the Term, and forced me to break an implicit engagement with those who are taking part in them,—if he had not believed that he was executing an ecclesiastical sentence upon a convicted heretic.

I cannot, my Lords and Gentlemen, believe that, great as are the privileges which the Right Reverend Bench has conceded to the Principal of King's College, their Lordships the Bishops ever intended to give him an authority superior to their own—superior to that of the Article by which they are bound; I cannot think that they wished to constitute him and the Council arbiters of the Theology of the English Church. Such a claim would be as alarming, I apprehend, to the public as to our ecclesiastical rulers. If some parents have been suspicious of the influence which I might exercise over their sons, I believe that there are few parents in England who will not complain that the College has departed from its original principle, when it gives such a scope to the private judgment of its chief officer, or even to the judgment of the body which manages its affairs.

I think it due, then, to my own character as a Clergyman, to the interests of the College, and to the liberties of the English Church, that I should call upon the Council, if they pronounce a theological sentence upon me at all, to declare what Article of our faith condemns my teaching. I conjure them not to use any phrases in condemning me which they would reject as loose and vague, if the property or the life of a fellow-citizen were in question. Whether I have unsettled the faith of my Pupils, by giving an interpretation of the word *Eternal* which I had maintained to be true (and especially important for Students in Divinity) before I was asked to join the Theological Department, the after-lives of those Pupils must determine. But if I have violated any law of the Church, that law can be at once pointed out—the nature of the transgression can be defined without any reference to possible tendencies and results. It is this justice, and not any personal favour, my Lords and Gentlemen, which I now request at your hands.

I have the honour to be,

My Lords and Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

F. D. MAURICE.

P. S. I have requested the Secretary to lay before the Council some copies of my Letter to the Principal, to which I have added some Notes. I would respectfully call the attention of the Council to the [Note B](#), page 26 of the pamphlet.

AFTER reading this letter, the Council decided that they did not think it necessary to enter further into the subject, and declared the two chairs held by me in the College to be vacant.

LETTER, & c.

DEAR MR. PRINCIPAL,

IN a letter dated Christ Church, July 14th (page 10 of our correspondence), you say: “Far be it from me to enter now or hereafter into a controversial argument with you on so awful a subject” (as that of Eternity or Eternal Punishment), “on which, so far as attempting to fathom the mystery, it seems to me the less said the better.”

Nevertheless, in a letter dated September (page 21), you enter into a very elaborate “controversial argument” on this subject, in the course of which more attempts are made to fathom the mystery than I should have thought at all desirable.

I do not complain that you have departed from your resolution. I am thankful to have a definite statement of your objections to me, as well as of the opinions which you think I ought to hold. But I have a right to draw this inference from the alteration which has taken place in your intentions. If you had found a passage in any of our Formularies to which you could have pointed me, and said “*that* condemns you,” you would have indulged your wish of abstaining from controversy. You have sought in vain for such a passage; therefore it has been necessary to establish a particular interpretation of the words in those Formularies and in the Bible, though in order to do so you have been obliged to say much on a subject on which you think that the less that is said the better.

You have alluded (in your last letter) to the absence of a dogmatic statement on the meaning of the word Eternal in our Articles, and to the evidence which the existence of such an Article among the original 42 affords that the omission was deliberate. I hope that the reasons you assign for the course which our Reformers pursued are satisfactory to your own mind. I am most anxious that they should be carefully weighed by the Council of King’s College and by the whole Church, as being the very best which, after a long consideration, a learned apologist was able to produce. They are these: (1) that the doctrine on the subject of punishment, which differs from yours, was an Anabaptist doctrine, and therefore needed not to be condemned after the first vehemence of the Anabaptist fever had subsided; (2) that the question had already been settled by the adoption of the Athanasian Creed in the 8th Article; (3) that some of the Reformers—Jewel, for instance—were very strong in condemning Origen; (4) that there may be many theological propositions which ought thoroughly to be received and believed though they are not contained in the Formulary which we have subscribed. To the first reason you have replied yourself in other parts of the letter; for you have stated that Origen in the third century, and not any Anabaptist in the sixteenth, was the author of the tenet which you disapprove.* To the second I have replied

* See [note A](#) at the end of the letter.

in a former letter, that the Athanasian Creed contains no explanation of the words Everlasting and Eternal, and that whatever sense of them we deduce from Scripture must be applied to them there. In my Essays I have stated my reasons for thinking that the sense of the words Eternal Life and Eternal Death which identifies them respectively with the knowledge of God and the absence of that knowledge, is the one which is directly suggested by the Athanasian Creed;* that the chief objections to it have arisen from the refusal to give the words that force; that unless we did tacitly acknowledge it, the expression “He who does not thus think concerning the Trinity” would become intolerable to the conscience of every minister and every hearer. To your third argument I reply, that if the Reformers did personally concur in your opinion and denounce the opposite, it is all the more remarkable that they were withheld (some might say by their good sense, I should say by a higher wisdom) from enforcing that opinion on the Church. Your fourth statement is immeasurably the most serious and important. The particular instance which you allege in defence of it strikes me as remarkably inappropriate; for the Resurrection of the Body is formally asserted in the Apostles’ Creed, which, as you say yourself, is adopted in the 8th Article. But the general notion which you encourage—that the King’s College Council may demand of its professors an assent to a number of *et cæteras* not included in the Formularies to which, as churchmen and clergymen, they have set their hand—is one for which I own I was not prepared. It will alarm, I believe, many persons who differ very widely with me. I do not see how it can fail to alarm every man who attaches any sacredness to his oaths or his subscriptions.

On this point I must insist very strongly. I said in a former letter that I accepted the words of our Formularies and of the Scriptures in what seemed to me their literal and simple sense, but that I would accept no new interpretation of them. In noticing this remark, you have availed yourself, of course unintentionally, of the equivocal force of the adjective “new.” You say, “I wish for no new Articles nor any new interpretations of our Formularies,” meaning that your interpretation is the old one. But I submit that everything is *new* to the subscriber of a Formulary which is not contained in that Formulary at the time he subscribes it, however old or familiar it may be. Our Catechism says that the “body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord’s Supper.” Long before that Catechism was composed, Paschasius had taught that the words “This is my body,” “This is my blood,” must mean that the Elements are transubstantiated; and nearly the whole Church has adopted his opinion. Yet if any one said to me, “This is what *you* must mean by the words in your Catechism,” I should answer, “This is *not* what I mean by them; you are putting a *new* force upon them.” He would understand me, I think, perfectly; he could not suppose that chronology had anything to do with the question. The Catechism does not teach me this interpretation of its doctrine; therefore to me it is a novelty.

But you complain that I have used vague language when I have spoken of “popular interpretations” to which I would not bind myself. I now answer without hesitation; by popular interpretations I understand the interpretations contained in your letter. I do not

* Theological Essays, note, p. 443-449.

deny that you are at perfect liberty, holding your position as a dignitary of the Church and the head of a College, to maintain those interpretations. You may see the principles which our Formularies assert more clearly through these *media* than you could without them; you may see those principles much more clearly than I do. But these *media* would as utterly distort them for me, or hide them from me, as the doctrine of Paschasius, or that of Zwingle, would distort for me or hide from me the principle asserted in our Catechism concerning the Eucharist. This is no new conclusion of mine. If in the year 1846, when you asked me—I never solicited the office—to be come a teacher in the Theological Department then about to be-established at King's College, you had stated your view of the word Eternal as you have stated it in your final letter, and had said, "I expect every professor in our College to agree in this view," I should have answered at once, "Then, sir, I can have nothing to do with your College;" and I should have proved to you, from books which I had published at that time, and from which I supposed you had acquired your knowledge of my orthodoxy and my competency, that I could not assent to such terms unless I contradicted all that I had tried to teach elsewhere.*

Your charges against me are two. First, my words "seem to throw an atmosphere of doubt on the simple meaning of the word Eternal." Secondly, "they convey a general notion of ultimate salvation for all." I will deal with each separately.

1. You intimate that you had been almost misled into a belief of my orthodoxy by finding that I asserted very broadly the theological importance of the word Eternal, and the philological as well as the theological duty of giving it the same import when it is applied to punishment as when it is applied to life. But you have discovered that I was practising an imposition upon you. You used a test which instantly detected my duplicity; I did not like, you perceived, the word Everlasting as well as the word Eternal; I could bear the one, I stumbled at the other.

I am sorry you spent so much time in seeking for this test, I would have told you at once, if you had asked me, that the word Eternal seemed to me a better equivalent for the word *αἰώνιος* than Everlasting. Since *ætas* is the obvious translation for *αἰών*, the cognate Latin adjective seems peculiarly suitable to express the cognate Greek adjective. Since there is nothing that apparently corresponds to the Greek substantive in the Saxon adjective, it must, I should conceive, offer a less adequate substitute. The passages which you have collected to show how closely the use of *αἰών* is connected in the New Testament with the use of *αἰώνιος* greatly favour this conclusion. I was so convinced on this ground of the superiority of the Latin derivative, that I ventured to complain of our translators for joining with it the word Everlasting in Matthew xxv. 46. My main objection, indeed, was to the ambiguity which arises from the use of two words for one; still I had no doubt which ought to have been chosen, which thrown aside. Two of the apologies which you offer for the translators I am sure they would indignantly have repudiated. They never would have dared to think about the "rhythm" of a passage in which our Lord declares what He will do when He shall sit upon

* See [note B](#) at the end of the letter.

the throne of His glory and before Him are gathered all nations. They could never have taken a word merely because an old translator from the Vulgate, in the infancy of our language, had found no better. Your other reason that they sought to connect the Saxon word with the Latin, offers a more valid—not, I think, a quite satisfactory—excuse for them. I conceive that they felt the value of the word Eternal; they shewed that they did by using it so frequently in spite of their fondness for Saxon. They were too well acquainted with the controversies of the fourth century, and with the history of theology, not to know how important it is that there should be a word expressing a permanent fixed state, not a succession of moments. The word αἰών, or *ætas*, served this purpose. Like our own word “Period,” it does not convey so much the impression of a line as of a circle. It does not suggest perpetual progress, but fixedness and completeness. The word αἰώνιος, or *Æternus*, derived from these, seemed to have been divinely contrived to raise us out of our Time notions,—to suggest the thought of One who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; to express those spiritual or heavenly things which are subject to no change or succession. The King James translators, therefore, hailed the word with which Tyndale or some one else had provided them, as a precious addition to the resources and powers of the language. And they wished, I conceive, to raise their own Saxon word Everlasting to its level. By using them indiscriminately, often together, they effected to a great extent this object. Even in colloquial language, much more in considerate books of human or divine science, Everlasting has acquired that impression of permanence which belongs to Eternal in virtue of its derivation. I admit the Providence over our translators which you speak of; I see a very remarkable token of it in this instance: I still think that they would have acted more rightly and more safely if they had construed Christ’s words more exactly.

In speaking of them I have replied to this part of your charge against me. If Everlasting is, as you say it is, and as I admit that it may be and ought to be, the exact synonym of Eternal, then I accept the one word in all the application in which I accept the other. I am glad, not sorry, for my own sake to find them used interchangeably in our Formularies, because thereby the inferior word has been rescued from its vulgar signification, and has acquired the force of the higher. But if I am compelled to measure the word Eternal, which is confessedly the most exact equivalent of αἰώνιος, by the word Everlasting, and not to measure Everlasting by Eternal, my reverence for Scripture, as well as the most sacred interests of theology, compel me to say, I will do no such thing. And this is what I find from the whole tenor of your letter that you desire me to do.

You say, indeed, that you have not the least wish that I should mix Eternity with Time, but only with Duration; and you find great fault with my logic or my honesty for not recognizing this distinction. I have one short answer to make to your long argument on this subject. If you *can* separate Time from Duration, by all means do it. *Then* I cancel my assertion that our Lord carefully excludes Duration from the Eternity of which He speaks. I should still think, indeed, that you had established a sense of the word which is not justified by ordinary usage, or by etymology. But I should rejoice so much to discover that you recognise an eternity which is not subject to Time, or merely a negation of Time, that I

should not stop to dispute about such trifles. Let us see how far this is the case. You say, "Setting aside what you must permit me to call this groundless cavil" (against our translators), "we are left to the full force of the argument derived from St. Matthew, c. xxv. v. 46. It lies in a small compass; and is very simple, but is not less convincing for that. Whatever our blessed Lord predicates of life, He predicates without the least distinction of punishment likewise; *but that He speaks of the life of the blessed as never ending, relatively to the ever-living Being who shall be their portion for ever, particularly when the application of the same term αἰώνιος to God himself is remembered, no one but the most reckless heretic or infidel would deny*; therefore, our blessed Lord speaks also of the punishment of the reprobate as never ending." I have quoted this passage simply for the sake of that clause which I have marked with italics. With the first clause and the last I do not meddle, because we are agreed that whatever the sense of αἰώνιος is in any of its uses, the same it must have in all of them.

Here we have your meaning of Eternal and Everlasting. You are not really pleading for either of the words which our translators have used. You are measuring both by a compound "endless" or "never ending" which they have not used at all. Now thus it seems to me you bring us under the conditions of Time in the most mischievous way. The "measures of duration" which you try to escape, by speaking of an absolute duration, may be used—are used in Scripture—to raise us above notions of Time. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last;" "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever;" "which is, and was, and is to come," are forms of speech which do not chain us to a beginning or an end, to yesterday or to-day, to the past, to the present, or the future; but teach us of One who is living in these "measures of duration;" and is not confined by them. But mere negative words, such as "endless," "never ending," start from a ground of Time; when I predicate them of God, I make Him a mere negation of Time; I conceive of Him just as the Magians did, as "Time without Bounds." Now I take leave to say that I may be "a reckless heretic or infidel" for refusing to do this, but that it is my desire to escape from heresy and infidelity which prevents me from doing it. I find every Heathen Philosopher embarrassed and bewildered in the search of Him in whom he was living and moving and having his being, by these Time-negations; I find him now flying to the popular mythology at the peril of conceiving God under a multitude of visible forms and images, now flying from that mythology and resting in a vague abstraction of unity. The heart and reason of these philosophers confessed that there was a Substance which they could not measure by their notions, which was the great reality that was before all Time, not the unreality which they made by merely contradicting what they beheld in Time. They longed to be told what this Substance is, that it should reveal itself to them. I have been taught to believe that the revelation of God in Christ is the answer to this longing; that there the Righteousness, Truth, Love, which cannot be measured by Time, which do not belong to Time, are brought within the faith and apprehension of the meek and lowly; that these constitute that eternal inheritance which God has prepared for them that love Him. It has seemed to me that if instead of coming to this revelation to instruct me in the nature of God and Eternity, I go back to my own notion of endlessness, and attribute that to God, I must fall into Heathenism. This, I am sure, is the lesson which one

learns from Augustin's Confessions;* it is no less the doctrine of the great Greek Father who fought the battle both with Heathenism and Arianism. In his mind the two battles were intimately connected together. He felt that Arius, in attributing notions derived from Time to the only begotten Son, was in fact bringing back the old divided Pagan worship. Athanasius asserted the *eternal* generation of the Son—not as a dry dogma but as a living principle, in which every child and peasant was interested—certainly not understanding Eternal to mean *endless*. If that force is given to it his doctrine means nothing—every argument by which he defended it is untenable.

How a theologian like yourself can have overlooked facts so notorious as these I should be at a loss to explain, if I did not know how ready divines as well as common people are to think *first* of the blessedness which is in reserve for them, and to lay down certain conditions as necessary to that; then to apply them to the nature and being of Him in whom all blessedness dwells, and from whom alone it can be derived, to the creature. The bliss of heaven you think *must* be endless: only a reckless heretic or infidel would deny that. Therefore it is right and reverent to speak of God as the endless Being—nay, it is wrong to speak of Him otherwise. I am sure any one of our older and greater divines would have told you that we do not want that kind of security for the bliss of heaven which we want for earthly possessions. No saint in heaven has that bliss in fee; he never wishes so to have it. It is the misery of the fallen creature, that he seeks to keep his treasures upon this tenure. The redeemed creature holds his by continual dependence on a Righteous and Loving being. While he trusts in God he has no fear that any good will be taken from him. Were he to lose his trust, he must lose all good, because he would be separated from the Source of Good.

I say, then, that it is not safe to conceive the nature of God according to our conditions, to bring down His eternity to our notions. I say that if we do that, the blessedness of heaven vanishes; the things that eye hath not seen nor ear heard become imaginary things, and we do not restore their reality or their worth by calling them “endless.”

But you have made an “induction” of passages from Scripture, which contain the word *αἰώνιος*. I can conceive no better way of arriving at the truth. In Physics, induction is the means of escaping from arbitrary definitions and classifications, and of bringing nature to tell her own secrets in her own way. If Divines will apply that honest and noble method to Scripture, especially if the head of a College will shew the members of it how they may be cured of their prejudices and confusions by coming to seek where it has been promised that they shall find, how much error may be put down, how much truth may be brought to light! Alas! your induction is pursued precisely according to the maxims which Bacon teaches us to avoid in *his* department of thought; the maxims which we should more religiously avoid in *ours*, if we believed that our notions are likely to be feeble and false, and that God's revelation is to deliver us from them.

You begin with counting the number of times which the word *αἰώνιος* occurs in the New Testament. You then proceed to classify the uses of this word, just as the old naturalists classified the observations which they made in the physical world, under names and notions

* See [note C](#) at the end of the letter.

of theirs; such as cold, hot, wet, dry. The result, I believe, is precisely the same. Nothing can be learnt from your induction. You bring with you what you find. You speak of some texts which refer to “God” Himself and to His “eternal power.” How much we ought to rejoice that there are such texts! Let us go to them, in our ignorance, to learn what they say. No; you know it all before-hand. In these passages, eternal *must* mean endless. You have got the notion and the predicate and the negation ready—the chains with which you are to bind your teacher, and make him utter just what you choose that he should utter.

But let us see how the induction applies in the other case. “The remaining sixty-one passages,” you say, “refer either to the future state of the Blessed or to the future state of the Damned; but the preponderance of use is, as might have been expected in a religion of mercy, very much on the side of the state of the Blessed; *i. e.* fifty-four passages against seven.” I must allude to this last sentence hereafter for another purpose. My present object is to quote at length three or four of those texts which you set down in your list, as referring to the future state of the Blessed. I shall take them from the First Epistle of St. John. In that Epistle the expression “Eternal Life” occurs very often. From the use of it in the writings of the last of the Apostles—of the beloved Disciple,—we may expect some light upon its meaning in the rest of Scripture—certainly at least in his own Gospel. Here is one: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled—of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us.” I. John, iii. 1-3. Here is another: “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer; and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” I. John, i. 15. Here is another: “And this is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his son.” Chap. v. 11. And another: “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the Son of God.” Chap. v. 13.* Once more: “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ; this is the true God and eternal life.” Chap. v. 20. All these passages, according to the statement in page 27, “refer to the *future* state of the Blessed.” Though St. John says, “The life *was* manifested, and we *have* seen it,” though he talks of the “eternal life *abiding* in men,” though he says “Christ *has* come and this *is* eternal life:” nevertheless it is assumed in your classification as a thing too obvious to be doubted that the Apostle speaks of that which has not yet been, but is to be hereafter.

After you have so strangely disregarded the plain letter and spirit of St. John when he uses these words in his Epistle, you must allow me to doubt whether you have settled as completely as you seem to think the signification of them, when they occur in the prayer which he records as an Evangelist. In one respect I admit that you have been entirely successful: you have proved that our Lord’s words are not a definition. When I used that

* See [note D](#) at the end of the letter.

expression it was with the limitation I stated in my Essays (p. 424). "If I spoke of *defining* eternal life, I should feel, and I think all would feel, that I was using an improper word; for how can we define that which is out of the limits of time? But in the depth of prayer and communion with His Father our Lord gives us that which corresponds to the most accurate and divine definition,—one which we are bound hereafter, if we reverence his authority, to apply on all occasions, and to use as the correction of our loose and vague conceptions."

I am grateful to you for enforcing and illustrating this assertion of mine, by first showing how little our Lord's words will bear to be measured by the ordinary rules of time; secondly, by pointing out what those conceptions are which they are needed to correct. I have spoken enough of the word "endless" already: I need not repeat what I have said to prove that it is a word of time, and not merely of duration, if duration can be separated from time. But if I could admit for a single moment that your interpretation of the passage taken alone was a simple and natural one,—if I could suppose our Lord to have used "eternal" there, not as describing the *quality* of the life, but merely the infinite ages during which it is to last—I should be absolutely precluded from that interpretation by all those uses of the expression which are most evidently parallel to this. The eternal life which Christ manifested, the eternal life which he has given, are surely spoken of without the least reference to duration; simply with a reference to the nature of the being in whom it dwells and on whom it is bestowed. You may think you have preserved the simple meaning which all poor and humble persons find in this text when they read the 17th of St. John. I believe that no devout humble person has read that chapter who has not been carried by it into a region entirely beyond your simple notions,—who has not felt that the Son of God Himself has come from the Father to give Him a glimpse into His own eternity. I am quite sure it has been so with you; that your notion of "Endless," however it may satisfy your formal understanding, however convenient it may be in confuting an opponent, does not satisfy your spirit in any higher and purer moment; that you cast it aside, and have the vision of a truth far deeper, diviner,—yes, and far simpler. And if you should succeed in enacting a fortieth Article, which shall affirm that the word eternal or everlasting, wherever it occurs in Scripture, is to be understood as meaning "endless,"—I doubt not you will find a great many to congratulate you upon the simplicity of your dogma, and upon the usefulness of it for driving such disturbers as me out of the Church; but I believe that those who praise you, and that you yourself, will lose more than you know or can dream of; that you will be destroying the faith of little children, while you undermine the whole science of Theology.

To sum up, then, what I have said upon this head of your accusation:—You are right in thinking that the form which you have given to it is "too mild." I do not throw an atmosphere of doubt upon *your* meaning of the word eternal. I repudiate it. If yours is the only orthodox sense of it, I have been teaching heresy for seven years to the pupils of your College. I have not, as I said in a former letter, alluded in my lectures to any difference that may exist between me and other religious teachers upon the subject of Future Punishment; but I have led my class to think of an Eternal Life which Christ has given—of an Eternal Kingdom which He has brought to light. I have connected this life and this kingdom with all the

history of the Church. I have said that the forgetfulness and denying of them were main causes of heresy, superstition, false worship. I have spoken, indeed, of this life as capable of a perfect realization—of this kingdom as destined to be purged of all that defiles it, hereafter. But I have not spoken of either as belonging only to the future. I have used St. John's words, which declare that they have been manifested, that they are ours. I have spoken of damnation as being the loss or deprivation of them; as the state of being without love, without hope, without God. So I *have* taught; and wherever I go, I mean, God being my helper, not to teach otherwise.

2. I now come to your second charge. My "words convey a general notion of ultimate salvation for all." I have said distinctly that I am *not* a Universalist, that I have deliberately rejected the theory of Universalism, knowing what it is; and that I should as much refuse an Article which dogmatized in favour of that theory as one that dogmatized in favour of the opposite. As it appears from your final letter that these assertions have either not been believed at all, or believed only to this extent, that you suppose some persons may go further than I do in pronouncing on the certainty of future salvation for the "wicked and impenitent," I must explain myself more fully.

I object to the Universalists, because they seem to me to stand on the very ground upon which you stand. The word *αἰώνιος* is with them a word of Time. Far from saying as I have that the substantive *αἰών* by its very limitation serves to suggest the thought of a fixed state out of Time, they eagerly dwell on the fact that an age must consist of a certain number of years: it is terminable, they say, by its very nature. Therefore, at the end of a certain term, say thirty or forty thousand years, we may believe that God's punishment of wicked men may be over, and they may be restored to favour. I have an utter want of sympathy with statements of this kind: they clash with all my convictions. How you answer them I am not equally able to understand.

If I believed that God inflicted certain external punishments on "wicked, impenitent, unbelieving sinners," for the sake of gratifying his vengeance, I might easily believe that after a certain time that vengeance would be satisfied, and that He would even make amends for it by the richness of His rewards. But I have shown in every page of my Essays that I believe wickedness, impenitence, and unbelief, to be the worst tortures to which men can be subjected; that as the possession of righteousness, love, truth, constitute eternal blessedness, these constitute eternal damnation and misery. What "general notion of salvation," then, do I hold out to "wicked, impenitent, unbelieving sinners?" Not that which you hold out when you speak of "the uncovenanted mercies of God." Not that which you hold out when you say that Christianity, "being a Religion of Mercy," offers "fifty-four passages" about the rewards of Heaven "against seven" about the punishments of Hell. This language I should be afraid to use. I think it must be exceedingly soothing to the unbelieving and the impenitent. The uncovenanted mercies of God—a phrase unknown to Scripture, not found in our Formularies—may by their vagueness give encouragement to any amount of false hope. A calculation of the chances of good against evil, such as that which your Scripture induction suggests, is precisely what a bad man—habitual gambler as he is—would be likely to comfort himself

with. Even if you limit your mercy to Heathens, or those who have been neglected by Christians (what an enormous class!), you do not help the cause of morality or truth, for you suggest the thought that men may be relieved from God's punishment, though they are sinful, and ignorant of Him. What I desire to preach is, "that the goodness of God is leading to repentance;" that it "is the will of God that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the *truth*." These are words of Scripture. I am as much afraid to limit them, being so distinct and solemn as they are, as I am to adopt the others which are so capricious and elastic, and which come with no similar authority. I am sent forth to proclaim the will of God, and to say that Christ has come into the world to fulfil it. I cannot make the assertion which these words contain more expansive, if I try. If I contract it, from the fear of the consequences which good or bad men may deduce from it, I set my wisdom above God's. I am sure that I shall never convert a single sinner if I leave him in doubt whether it is God's will that he and every man should be converted or not.

In one of your letters (p. 17 of our correspondence,) you have expressed your conclusion respecting my opinions on this subject in an antithetical form. "Your letter seems to me to say, 'the *mode* I do not pretend to discover, but the *fact* I am sure of, that God's will that all men shall be saved will somehow finally triumph.'" This sentence is curiously wide of the truth; as nearly as possible the reverse of it. I "*do* pretend to discover the *mode*" in which God will save any man who is saved; for it is revealed. The words, "by this will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all," tell me that it is the will of God, acting through the Mediator who has died for man, upon a man's will, which can alone raise him from sin to holiness, from death to life, wherever he is, in whatever circumstances he is. What I dare not pronounce upon is the *fact* that every will in the universe must be brought into consent with the Divine will. Stating the proposition as you state it, I should indeed tremble to affirm the contrary, and I think any man would. Dare you make it a positive article of faith that God's will, being what the Scripture says it is, shall *not* finally triumph? Nevertheless there is such a darkness over the whole question of the possible resistance of the human will, that I must be silent, and tremble and adore.

You have indeed discovered that I am reviving the old question of the possibility of God's will triumphing in spite of the will of man, and you quote in large capitals a passage from Butler, as decisive against me, in which he affirms that we make very free with the merciful will of God when we suppose that it is merely a will to produce happiness, and not to make happiness dependent upon goodness. Had you ever read a single book of mine, I believe you would have discovered that it is from first to last an assertion of the doctrine that man can only be blessed when he becomes the free servant of God, choosing His will: had you read what I have written on this very subject in the book which you denounce as heretical, you would have seen that it is built upon Butler's position, and that I not only hold goodness to be the necessary means to happiness, but that happiness apart from it is a dream and an impossibility.

You asked me, in one of your earlier letters, to tell you what I thought about the cases of Judas and Voltaire; you complain in your final letter that I avoided the question. I certainly

passed it by, because I wished to speak only of what is revealed. Nothing has been revealed me about the state of Voltaire. I know a little about my own sin, about my own resistance to God's will; nothing at all about the length and breadth of his. Something *is* said about Judas. "It were or had been good for that man if he had never been born." This is our version of our Lord's words in Matt. c. xxvi. v. 24, and in Mark, c. xiv. v. 21: the construing of them is difficult, but I have no other to offer. I receive them with awe and reverence, as the words of Him who knows what is in man, and who died for man. Nor do I find them merely terrible, though they are so terrible. I think the inference of those who walk the streets of Christian London, from their observation of what is passing there, might naturally be, that it would be good for ninety-nine hundredths of its people, and of all the people in the world, if they had never been born. This natural opinion is immensely strengthened by the current doctrine among religious men respecting the fixed doom which is awaiting those hereafter who are sunk so low here. By speaking of the case of Judas, as if there were some awful singularity in it, our Lord helps us to resist this horrible but most plausible thought. Under the teaching of Him who knows past, present, and future, we can drive it off. If we cannot, we ought to become mad. At the same time I do for myself draw a much more alarming lesson from the words respecting Judas, than if I applied them generally. I cannot forget that he was not a coarse reprobate or open infidel, but a Minister of Christ, one who ate at His table, and preached repentance. Thinking of that I dare not judge others. And in reference to the bad moral effects which you suppose must follow from my refusal to limit God's love by earthly measures, I may appeal to words which I have heard again and again about this very case of Judas, from those who agree with you in your general opinion. They have said, "Judas perished through despair. Had he turned and trusted in Christ's love, even after he betrayed Him, he would have found mercy as Peter did." This is a commonplace among preachers; the most severe resort to it. To encourage doubts of God's willingness to save, is not then I apprehend the way to rescue men from the perdition of Judas.

And if you do speak of such a love at all, you may try to confine it by dates; you may say it will last till to-morrow or next day, not longer; but you will labour in vain. The man you speak to will either receive it as something absolute, deep, immeasurable, upon which he may cast himself for deliverance from sin; or he will disbelieve it altogether, as Judas did. If it is a crime, as you tell me it is, to say that "there is an abyss of love deeper than the abyss of death," I am sure I cannot address myself to any man whose conscience is sorely tormented, for he feels that he is in such an abyss of death. He dreads what shall come to him hereafter, because he feels what has come to him already. One seems to him but the lengthening out of the other. We have no need to tell him about eternal misery or damnation; he knows much more of it than we do. If we are afraid to tell him that he may be emancipated from it, he will destroy himself as Judas did, and shall not we be accessories to the deed?

A considerable portion of your last letter is devoted to a subject of which I had spoken, I thought, sufficiently in a previous one. Because I have considered *eternal* punishment or *eternal* death as expressly the loss of God's presence,—the word "eternal" having that force which I tried under the former head to show that it always has in Scripture,—you take much

pains to prove that there are other punishments different from these, which will befall men after death. Had you read my Essays, you would have seen that I am rather more eager than most Divines of this day to maintain the doctrine of continuance, which is the ground of Butler's argument for a future state, in the first chapter of the Analogy. I have learnt from that great man to look upon the future world not as generically unlike the present, but as the unfolding and developing of that which is imperfect and seminal here. How then can I suppose that, in the future state, all good and all evil will be absorbed into spiritual good and spiritual evil? I believe we shall have bodies as well as spirits there as we have here; conditions adapted to the body as well as conditions adapted to the spirit; only that the outward state will depend upon the inward more really and evidently than it does now. What need, then, to tell me that there are words in Scripture describing the future, which intimate this fact? I have no doubt of it, though I may doubt whether some of those to which you refer have a spiritual or an external signification. If you wish me to go into a careful examination of the language of Scripture respecting the "worm" and "the fire," I shall be ready at a fitting time to undertake the task. The enquiry you know must be a very long and minute one—loose, hasty, rhetorical observations upon it can only mislead us.

To arrive at the strictest sense of the words, to apply them consistently with the analogy of Scripture, not to confound spiritual things with sensible, most of all not to adopt abstractions, which are neither one nor the other, but a miserable compromise between them, should be our object. I might be disposed to follow the best Divines in taking the undying worm to express the sting of conscience, which is the most real anguish conceivable; but I would rather take it to mean the most ordinary visible earth-worm, than I would turn it into a mere phantom, appealing not to the senses nor to the spirit, but contrived by its vagueness to frighten people of weak nerves, or to scare the ignorant not from crime but into superstition and hypocrisy. Such terrors are most resorted to in countries where crimes are most outrageous, where there is a mighty religious machinery, very little of Christian faith or Christian morality.

Do not suppose, however, that if I decline at this particular time to investigate at length the force of the passages which you have quoted about eternal or everlasting fire, I have the least shrinking from those passages, or that I wish there were fewer of them in the Bible than there are. If I did not think that God's wrath was burning, and would burn always, against that which is evil and unloving, I could have no faith in His goodness and His love; I should have no hope for the world. An "endless" Being may often change his purposes, though his duration is infinite. An eternal Being is the same—essentially the same—yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The question is not whether that fire will go on burning, but what it will or will not consume. On that point you see your way to pronounce a positive opinion. I do not see mine. You can explain to your satisfaction the words that Death and Hell shall be cast into the lake of fire. I do not profess to understand them; but they certainly convey to me an impression of a victory over all moral evil, over all which is contrary to the nature of God, that I should be very sorry to lose. In like manner, you treat very contemptuously my literalness for supposing that our Lord may speak, in the 25th of Matthew, of a judgment of

nations; though that I believe has been a not uncommon opinion among commentators, and though I did not say a word which could exclude individuals from His sentence. I referred to the belief which is very strong in the minds of some of the best men living, that God would ultimately restore the people of Israel not to “external privileges” but to faith,—as a confirmation of my words that the most awful obduracy ever resting on the heart of men may be melted by the love of God. In each case I have thought and spoken of that love as only removing punishment by removing sin; I have desired, and hope always to desire, for myself and for all men, that we may never cease to be punished by God till we cease to punish ourselves by rebelling against Him.

It still remains that I should say a few words respecting Origen. You tell me that I have revived his heresy. Yet you have not quoted a single passage from Origen to show what his heresy is. If he dogmatised, as you say he did, on the salvation of all men and devils, what he held has nothing to do with me, for I have said that I would not and could not dogmatise on the subject at all. I am less likely than most to be a follower of Origen, for I happen to be rather passionately addicted to the literal sense of the Old Testament, which he was so fond of reducing into allegories. But when you speak of him as “universally condemned in the Church,” you must allow me to examine so very sweeping an assertion. If you will turn to the 65th letter of Jerome to Pammachius and Oceanus (*Opera*, vol. ii. fol. p. 129), in which he defends himself from the charge of having been a disciple of Origen, and gives his reasons for denouncing him, you will see that no council had *at that time* pronounced a sentence against him, and that the reason of Jerome’s zeal against him was the extreme popularity of his writings and of his opinions throughout the Eastern Church. Erasmus, in his dedication of the works to Archbishop Warham, puts forth this defence for Jerome’s violence. Jerome says himself, “*Sic legam ut cæteros; quia sic erravit ut cæteri. Sed dicas ‘Si communis est error cur solum persequimini?’ Quia vos solum laudatis, ut apostolam.*”

This vehement admiration might have been discouraged by the wiser Greek Fathers of the fourth century. But they certainly had used no words which amount to condemnation. Athanasius, living in his own city so near his time, takes great pains, in his defence of the Nicene Synod, to prove that Origen had maintained the coeternity of the Son with the Father, however in his strife with Sabellianism he might have seemed to say otherwise (*Vol. i. p. 277; ed. Paris. 1686*). He calls him *φιλόπρονος*, and is evidently anxious to secure his suffrage. Indeed, it is clear from his writings, especially that against the Gentiles, how much he owed to him. When he is urging against those who endeavoured to maintain that Arianism was comparatively innocent, because only the sin against the Holy Ghost was pronounced hopeless, he alludes to Origen’s doctrine about the future state merely in these passing words:—“If so, why is the unfortunate Origen to be blamed henceforth for announcing an end of punishment”—*ἐὰν πάλιν τοῦτο ἀληθές διατί λοιπὸν ἐγκαλεῖται ὁ ἄθλιος Ὠριγένης, τέλος κηρύττων τῆς κολάσεως*—words which certainly show that he did not adopt the opinion, and that it had been censured, but which are very unlike the strong condemnation that came forth in quite other terms a century and a half after, from a very different quarter. If again you will look at the passage of Augustin in the *De Civitate Dei*, lib.

xxi. c. 17, where he deals directly with Origen's supposed opinion, you will be struck with the exceeding mildness and hesitation of his language. "Nunc," he begins, "cum misericordibus nostris agendum et pacificè disputandum; qui vel omnibus illis hominibus quos justissimus Judex dignos Geheunâ judicabit, vel quibusdam eorum, nolunt credere pœnam sempiternam futuram vel post certas metas pro cujusque peccati quantitate longioris sive brevioris* inde existimant liberandos. Qua in re misericordior, profecto fuit Origenes, qui et ipsum Diabolum atque angelos ejus post graviora pro meritis et diuturniora supplicia ex illis cruciatibus eruendos atque sociandos electis angelis credidit. Sed ilium et propter hoc et propter, alia nonnulla, et maxime propter alternantes sine cessatione miserias et beatitudines, non immerito reprobavit Ecclesia." So mildly does this great man speak of a theory which certainly strikes one as far more complicated and more likely to be mischievous than even the one which you have attributed to Origen. It is true, however, that partly through Jerome's influence, partly from private reasons of his own, a bishop of the fourth century was induced to pronounce a formal condemnation of Origen, and to call upon his brethren to do the same. That Bishop was Theophilus, the cruel persecutor of Chrysostom, who made it one of the principal charges against that admirable man, at the infamous Synod of the Oak, that he had received into Communion at Constantinople the Origenian monks whom he had driven out of Alexandria. He is the first utterer of that universal sentence against Origen of which you speak. Anastasius of Rome is the second; he had frankly written to Jerome to tell him that he knew nothing about Origen, and wished for information: having received the particulars from his accuser (the opinion about the future state was only one head of the accusation, for on that point Jerome himself, as you may see from the end of his commentary on Isaiah, † was far from settled in his own mind) proceeded to pass sentence. The next representatives of the Church were more illustrious and decisive. Two centuries after the death of Origen, Justinian, instigated by Theodora, sentenced him to endless perdition, and the Bishops at the fifth Council of Constantinople were induced to accept a heretic and a harlot as their theological dictators.‡ I had taken it for granted that the doctors of the middle ages must have followed Jerome in his condemnation of a man whose writings they could only have known through some indifferent Latin version. But I find Bernard (Serrno 34) addressing the brothers of his monastery, on a passage of Origen, whom it seems they were in the habit of reading, and only remarking, by way of justification for the slight complaint he makes of it, "Quamvis ne hoc quidem silendum arbitror quod evidentissime ilium contra fidem nonnulla scripsisse sanctorum Patrum tradat auctoritas, atque ideo non sine circumspectione monet esse legendum." A man who was cut off from the Church, and doomed to perdition, was not to be read by a set of monks in the twelfth century without circumspection! And this in the judgment of Bernard, who was so remarkably a "malleus hæreticorum." Since the Reformation, I believe, no Protestant writer of any school, however he may have disliked

* Another reading, probably a better, is "longiores sive breviores."

† See [note E](#) at the end of the letter.

‡ For an account of the intrigues which led to Origen's condemnation, see Neander, K. G. 2d Period, 3d Abtheil. p. 1140, et seq.

Origen for his Platonism or his Allegories, has spoken of him without the highest respect. There are very few of them who would not join me in saying that whatever may have been his errors, they would rather take their lot with him, wherever he is, than with Justinian and Theodora, and the bishops who pronounced an anathema upon him.

But the important point for us is, that there is at least one considerable exception to his universal condemnation by the Church. That exception is supplied by our own Church. The framers of our Articles had the decrees of Justinian, and of the fifth council of Constantinople, before them; they did *not* pronounce any ratification of those decrees. They condemned Novatian and Pelagius—men whom we know only through those that have replied to them. They did nothing to swell the chorus of anathemas against Origen, though his name is one of the most prominent in ecclesiastical history, though his works were referred to in their day, as now, in every theological treatise. I thank you for having introduced the name of Origen, utterly irrelevant as it is to my case, because it has given me an occasion for again calling your attention to this silence of our Reformers on the subject upon which you decide so peremptorily.

After writing a great many pages in defence of your opinion, you observe that you have no occasion to defend the orthodox faith, because so many eminent divines have performed that task already. I meet the tacit assumption that I am attacking the orthodox faith, with a flat and indignant denial, and proceed to make just one remark on the roll of champions whom you could have produced, if you had chosen, to confound me. I am far from saying that it would not be possible to draw out a catena of authorities in support of a theory about endless punishment, *something like* that which you have propounded. It would also have been most easy at the time of the Reformation to draw out a similar catena of authorities in favour of indulgences and supererogation, against justification by faith. But the Reformers had instruments, if they chose to use them, by which they could snap that chain in pieces. They could appeal from the men who in their logical and argumentative writings were setting up human merit, to those same men in their hours of humiliation and devotion. They could appeal from argumentative writings which proved how dangerous it was for men to trust in God unless they had some virtues which authorised the trust, to earnest discourses in which sinners were invited to trust in Him as the only way by which they could acquire any virtues. They could show that all the strength of these teachers, all that had really endeared them to the Church, all that they had clung to on their death-beds or at the stake, might be found in those acts of devotion and in that Gospel; that all which had made their testimony weak, all which had separated them from each other, lay in the conclusions that seemed to them so irresistible when they were disputing and condemning. They could appeal, above all, to the old Creeds as witnesses that men were simply to believe in the God who had revealed Himself to men in His Son; that they were not called to believe in indulgences or supererogation, or anything which interfered with the other faith.

I believe that the catena which you have not produced, but which you say you could produce, might be shattered even more triumphantly in the same way. No doubt, divines—eminent divines—have thought themselves at liberty to dogmatise about the limits of God's

love and willingness to save. They have expressed themselves with great certainty on the subject; they have pronounced vehement censures upon those who said they were taking a power into their hands which God had not given them; and were narrowing a message with which they were entrusted. But those same divines have, in their secret prayers and confessions, said that they were the chief of sinners, and that they had no hope except from a love that was infinite, “deeper than the abyss of death.” These same men, when preaching the Gospel, have found that they must declare that the will of God is that all “men should be saved, and should come to the knowledge of the truth.” In these assertions, which sounded so broad, so dangerous, humble men have recognised their godliness, their sincerity, their power; these have united them in the closest bonds to each other. Their theories about the limitations of God’s love have been various and discordant—the causes of vacillation and inconsistency in their own discourses—of separation from their brethren.* At one moment all is clear and positive: the next there are exceptions (most dangerous exceptions) to be made on the plea of “uncovenanted mercies.” Because they could come to no agreement in these dogmas, a purgatorial scheme has been devised; all the dark inventions to which it has given birth have been necessary, that the human heart might not be utterly wretched and hopeless. Meantime, the creeds (though one of them speaks so decidedly of eternal or everlasting damnation, thereby startling and offending those who do not look upon this damnation as importing the loss of the knowledge of God) do *not* prescribe the limitations within which trust in God is lawful; they encourage it to the utmost. The framers of our own Articles are silent,—I repeat it once more—deliberately, intentionally, silent upon that tenet which declares that such trust, beyond certain time boundaries, is unlawful.

But you say that if I do not embrace that tenet, and make it the ground of my warnings to men, I am removing some of the influences which deter them from crime and encourage them to seek for righteousness. I cannot say how entirely I agree with you that those influences are but too weak already. I feel most deeply how weak they are: that has been my main reason for delivering and publishing the passages which you have censured. I do not mean to go into the metaphysical question which you have raised, whether “the common instincts of mankind being judges, everlasting misery is not only equal to misery taken indefinitely, but far more awful;” I do not think I understand the statement sufficiently to comment upon it. But, be that as it may, I do not find that these everlasting torments upon which you dwell are brought home in our sermons to the consciences of particular evil doers. They float vaguely about in the rhetoric of preachers; the individual drunkard, adulterer, gambler, parasite, oppressor, does not in the least perceive that they are intended for him. Nor does the Clergyman intend them for him. In his study he may have settled that they must apply to such and such persons: when he is brought face to face with them, he begins to think of all the influences which may have acted upon them from childhood upwards to tempt them into evils to which *he* has never been tempted; he stammers, mutters dangerous encouragements, and leaves them to think that they may go on in their destructive habits

* See [note F](#) at the end of the letter.

and find some “uncovenanted mercies” to help them at last. If they had been told plainly that the state of body and of mind which they have brought upon themselves, and in which they may become fixed, is an accursed damnable state; that from this they need a present deliverance; that God offers them one; do you think that they would have nothing in their daily experience, or in their inmost conscience, to confirm the words?

Would such language be less distinct, less practical, than that which sets before them the aggregate of all possible torments hereafter as the penalty of their misdoings here? Words of this kind, I believe, convey to them no sense at all, except one of revolting, incredulity, disgust: the others are a Gospel to them, a Gospel from God, taking a form as directly addressed to their needs as the exhortations which they hear from the ordinary worldly moralist, only assuring them of a divine help in their emancipation from their outward transgressions, and of another emancipation from inward misery and pangs of conscience which he is utterly unable to offer. Now this would be the method I should endeavour, with God’s help, to pursue myself, and to urge upon other preachers. Whether it is so vague, ridiculous and fantastic a method, as you represent it, I leave others to decide. If I thought the great end of God’s revelation was to tell men of future bliss or future woe, it might be a legitimate question whether your denunciations of fire and worms, or mine of being left without God, would be the most or least ineffectual: I believe they would be nearly on a level. But as I speak of a present evil, which may grow harder and deeper every day, and of a present deliverance from that evil which God’s grace offers to the will and conscience of a voluntary and conscious being, I think the dark vision of being left without such a friend,—of being left to himself,—is something more real, more dreadful to a man, than any which you can conjure up; even as the hope of living under His government and enjoying His friendship would be far more blessed and full of immortality than one of some unknown reward for services never performed.

You say, most rightly, that the influence of what I have said on the theological students ought to have been considered by me before I published my Essays. I did consider it; they were present to my mind while I was thinking over the awful subjects I have treated of, and while I was putting my thoughts into words. I did remember that they were going forth into different parishes of this land, where they would have to address themselves to the most criminal, the most hardened, the most indifferent, the most unbelieving. I did consider that they might have to encounter some of those revived Anabaptist tenets, to which you darkly allude, respecting property and marriage. I did ask myself how will these young men be able to face all these terrible enemies,—how may they themselves be preserved from insincerity and from despair? I *knew* that not a few of the clergy—yes, of the best and truest among them—had been driven into insincerity by thinking that they were bound by their profession to use phrases respecting God’s purposes to men which they felt that, as ministers of his Gospel, they ought not to use; that a number of them had been driven to despair by feeling that they must declare that Christ came into the world not to save it, but to pronounce the condition of ninety-nine out of every hundred of its inhabitants hopeless. I did believe that some must say to the clergy generally—to those for whom they have themselves to give

account particularly—"You are not forced by the Formularies you have subscribed to put yourselves in this dreadful position. You have good news to preach. You may say 'that there is an abyss of love deeper than the abyss of death.'" I did think that the task of helping, so far as in me lay, the members of my own order and the multitudes—I repeat the word, the multitudes—who are in misery because they feel as if we had no message to them but one of wrath and destruction, was not "self-imposed." I thought that it was imposed upon me by my ordination vow; that if I were to shrink from it I should, in the sight of God, be breaking that vow.

You ask me why I did not resign my professorship before I published my Essays? I answer, I believed that I was doing what it was right that I should do as a clergyman of the English Church; therefore I believed that I was doing that which it was right I should do as a Professor of Divinity in King's College. I was not acquainted with those tacit engagements which you tell me I contracted when I took that office. I knew that I was bound by the Scriptures, the Prayer Book, and the Articles. I knew that I was under solemn obligations to God as an ordained man. If I had supposed that you desired more of your Professors than that they should endeavour faithfully to fulfil these engagements, I should have felt I was committing a sin in placing myself under your government. I did not believe that that was the intention of the Council, or of the Chairman, or of the Visitor; therefore I did not resign.

Nor can I resign now. Far more is at stake than the question whether I am fit to be a teacher in King's College, or even than whether I am fit to be a Minister of the English Church. Every one of my colleagues is interested in knowing whether the Council demands that he shall assent to certain conclusions of the Principal concerning our Formularies, and not to the Formularies themselves. Every clergyman is interested in knowing, if in the judgment of his fathers and brothers in Christ, it is a greater offence to throw "an atmosphere of doubt" on a certain "meaning of the word Eternal," or to throw an atmosphere of doubt on the whole question whether God loves His creatures; whether He desires their salvation; whether the Cross of Christ is or is not the complete exhibition of His character.

Tens of thousands of laymen as well as clergymen—not, as you fancy, of laymen or clergymen, who are anxious for "relaxations," who want a more indulgent Gospel than that which their fathers received, but who cannot bear the equivocations, relaxations, indulgences, which the popular doctrine substitutes for the full proclamation of a love that is stronger than sin and death—crave for satisfaction on these points. You may succeed in driving them out from among you; I tremble to think how soon. But if you do, you will deprive the Church of England of some of those who love her best,—who, in evil days, will show whether they clung to her because it was fashionable and respectable to do so, or because they found in her springs of life and healing. When such issues as these are involved in the decision of the Council, how dare I think for a moment about so paltry a point as whether they will take from me my Professorship or not? If they shall determine that, after the discovery which has been made, not only to them but to the public, of the wide differences which exist between us on certain points, my position as your subordinate is no longer tenable, I shall not impeach the justice or the wisdom of their resolution. But in that

case I demand from them, as English gentlemen, that they will declare distinctly to the world the grounds on which they dismiss me. I demand, further, that they shall authorize the publication of this correspondence.

You have informed the public through the Record newspaper that you are examining into my orthodoxy. I desire that the course and issue of that examination should also be known. If you should wish to answer this letter in such a publication I shall not object. I am not anxious for the last word. My defence is closed. Unless new topics of accusation should be brought forward, I have no desire to reopen it.

Faithfully yours,

F. D. MAURICE.

NOTES.

NOTE A.

IT is perfectly true, as a valued friend has remarked to me, that the original 42d Article condemns the very opinion which I have condemned in this letter. I hold it to be “a dangerous opinion that all men, be they never so ungodly, shall at length be saved, when they have suffered pain for their sins a certain time appointed by divine justice.” Such a doctrine entirely outrages my idea of the divine justice, of the nature of sin. But I am not the less thankful that the Elizabethan Reformers struck out this Article from their list. It would have suggested the notion that the judgment of God might be controlled and anticipated by ours; it would have been a snare to the consciences of many who take refuge in the notion that a certain amount of pain may be accepted as a compensation for evil, rather than adopt an alternative which seems to them still more at variance with the Gospel. Most mercifully, therefore, has it been ordained that the Articles which we have subscribed should contain no decision whatever on this subject.

The fact is not disputed; about the reason of the silence there be many opinions. Dr. Jeff has suggested one which is exceedingly plausible—most likely, I should suppose, the true one. The Reformers were frightened by the practical offences of the Anabaptists; in their eagerness to stop an immediate evil, they hastily pronounced several decrees which would have been most mischievous if they had become parts of a permanent code. For the faith in the fact of a bodily resurrection which the Apostles’ Creed demands, would have been substituted, as Dr. Jelf seems to admit, a dry theory about it; because Millenianism had been associated with sensuality, such men as Mede, or as Mr. Elliott and Mr. Faber, would have been shut out from the ministry of our church. The Providence which averted such consequences is one for which I should think we must all be most thankful.

NOTE B.

In the year 1845 I published a pamphlet entitled “The New Statute and Mr. Ward.” The subject interesting to Oxford men. As my pamphlet was short,—as it was noticed in the *Times* newspaper,—as it was the first I had written after Dr. Jelf became principal of King’s College, in the General Department of which I was a Professor,—as he was a Canon of Christ Church,—I had some right to expect that he might refer to it as a means of ascertaining what I thought and believed. Within a year after the appearance of it he asked me to become a Professor of Theology. In this pamphlet I spoke of the new test which had been proposed to the University as a security against the “non-natural” subscription to the Articles which Mr. Ward had confessed and defended. All who accepted the test would have bound themselves to take the Articles in the sense in which they believed them to be intended by the compilers, and to be imposed by the existing authorities of the University. I objected to both conditions. I said*—

“It [the declaration] is made to ensure a strict and faithful subscription; it ought then to be itself construed strictly; to begin with seeking for convenient interpretations, possible evasions of it, would be a conscious transgression of its purpose. Unless, then, I think that my sense of every Article is the same with that which, so far as I can ascertain by all the best means of information within my reach, was the sense of the Reformers; unless I am equally well convinced that my sense is that of the University in the present day, taking either the majority of its members, or the current opinion in Oxford, or the Heads of Houses, or the Vice-Chancellor for the time being, as representing the University; I dare not give the pledge which the Statute requires.

* If my memory does not deceive me, this very passage was noticed and attacked by Mr. Ward in his defence before the Convocation; so that Dr. Jelf had notice of its existence from no friendly quarter.

“Now I am not clear upon either of these points.

“First, as to the Reformers. I will give two instances (and they are only instances, for the principle which is involved in them must, it will be seen, extend, extend further,) of Articles which I have solemnly subscribed, which I most heartily believe, which I have found of the greatest profit to me in theological studies, and in the practice of life; yet, which I connect with convictions foreign, as I suspect, to the habits of thinking which prevailed among the compilers. The first I will speak of is the seventh. ‘The Old Testament is not contrary to the New, for both in the Old and New Testament, everlasting life (*æterna vita*, Lat. Art.) is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard which feign that the old Fathers did only look for transitory promises. (*Quare male sentiunt qui veteres tantum in Promissiones temporarias sperasse confingunt.*)’

“To this statement I subscribe in the very strictest sense. I use the superlative because I take the words ‘*æterna vita*,’ not as they are explained by any Doctor of the Church, by any Council, provincial or œcumenical, but as they are explained by our Lord Himself in His last awful prayer, “This is life eternal, that they may know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ.” Now that knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ was offered to men in the Old Testament as well as in the New; that the sacred books made known the steps by which men were led into this wonderful knowledge; that the two parts of it are so intricately interwoven, that the knowledge of the absolute God without the knowledge of the Mediator would have been impossible: that this was the knowledge which all holy Jews felt to be their exceeding great reward, and in comparison of which all other rewards were as nothing; that all their expectations were therefore pointing continually towards a time when this knowledge should in some way be brought near to them, and they should be enabled to receive it; and that it is indeed ‘feigning’ to say that those who had such a faith and hope as this in Him who is, and was, and is to come, and in Him whose goings forth are from everlasting, and who should be the King of everlasting ages, were looking for transitory promises; all this I steadfastly believe. But I am by no means certain that the Reformers would have given that precise force to the words ‘eternal life,’ upon which my construction of the Article turns. I do not feel sure that they might not have been willing to take the words ‘future state’ as a synonym of the words ‘eternal life.’ If the Articles had been drawn up in the eighteenth century, there would have been no doubt about the question; one phrase would certainly have been looked upon as a perfect equivalent for the other. The men of the sixteenth were undoubtedly great Augustinians, and no one ever read a page of Augustin without perceiving that he (followed, in this respect at least, by the greater schoolmen) connected the words ‘eternal life’ most carefully with the knowledge of God. Still I am not sufficiently certain upon the point to be the least justified in affirming that I take the words in that sense in which they were originally promulgated. And it would be an outrage upon my conscience to express assent or consent to any Article which did put ‘future state’ in the Article for ‘eternal life.’ First, because nothing seems to be so important for the interpretation of Scripture, and for the establishment of a sound theology, as that the revelation of God, and not the notion of rewards and punishments, should be felt to be the end of the Divine dispensations; and secondly, because, with the case of Hezekiah before me, illustrated as it is by a multitude of other passages, I cannot persuade myself that a ‘future state’ *was* presented to the hopes and apprehensions of those who lived under the old covenant, as it is to those who live under the new.*

“The next case is a stronger one; the Article which is the subject of it is directly connected with the Romish controversy, and has been especially denounced by Mr. Ward. The 13th Article says, ‘Works done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit, are not pleasant to God, neither do they make men meet to receive grace, or (as the school authors say) deserve grace of congruity, [*neque gratiam (ut multi*

* “The prayer of Hezekiah (Isaiah xxxviii.) must, I should think, be acknowledged as the key to the solution of the whole question: most instructive it is in that point of view. ‘I shall not see the Lord, even the Lord in the land of the living;’ this was the fear of the righteous king. He trembles lest he might be going into a world in which the Lord would not be made known to him; lest when his eyes closed upon the cherubim and the mercy-seat, the vision which had been vouchsafed him of the unseen King should be withdrawn.”

vocant) de congruo merentur. Lat. Art.] Yea rather, for that they are not done as God hath willed and commanded them to be done, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin, [peccati rationem habere non dubitamus. Lat. Art.]

“There are few Articles in the whole collection which seem to me more important than this; it lays the axe to the root of that semi-Pelagianism, of which the Romish system is the embodiment; it denies the possibility of an act being good which *originates* in the creature; it affirms the rectitude of a voluntary creature to consist in its dependence upon God; its sin (in other words, sin itself, since sin can only be predicated of a voluntary creature) to consist in separation from God. These principles seem to me to be the very elements of Christian morality; the forgetfulness of them to have been the cause of almost infinite confusions; the apprehensions of them to be a blessing equally precious to the intellect and to the heart. But the earnestness with which I recognise them drives me to a conclusion which I am strongly inclined to believe that the compilers of the Articles would not have admitted; nay, which a certain turn in the phraseology of this very Article would go far to convince most persons that they denied. Certain acts done by heathens I conceive to be distinctly good acts, to have sprung from right feelings. You may tell me they were mixed with pride, ambition, what you please. Probably they were; it is not the pride or ambition I admire, but that which these qualities interfered with and defiled. If I confound the two I am guilty of the sin of calling good evil, and evil good; I am outraging my conscience, I am perplexing all morality. But these good feelings I, utterly repudiating Pelagianism, and believing the assertion of this Article, say could not have *originated* in the minds of these heathens; they must have had a higher source, they must have come down from the Father of lights, the only source of good. They must have proceeded from the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of His Spirit. I believe further, that *faith* must have been at the root of their good deeds, faith not of course in a manifested Christ, but still faith in Him who is the only Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; who must be recognised, under whatever shadows, and in whatever dimness, by every man who really seeks to be delivered out of his darkness and ignorance, and to find righteousness and truth.* That the Reformers denied the existence of heathen virtue, I see no reason to believe; if they had practically denied it, how could they have taken so much pains that heathen authors should be taught in their schools? how could they have quoted so much from them in their writings? And had they fairly set the question before themselves in this manner, ‘Dare we, affirming as we do that all goodness of every kind must have Christ as its author—denying as we do the doctrine that a man can bring forth any right fruits from the root of his selfish, evil nature—refuse to believe as Clemens and Origen did about this matter, and so to give more glory to the Lord of all;’ I think they would have felt themselves compelled as Christians, compelled as logicians, to acquiesce in the position which I have maintained. But there were many causes in operation at that time, which may have hindered them from thus stating the question clearly to themselves, and so from bringing their theological theory in harmony with their practical conviction.

“It was the merit of the Reformation to bring out the facts of our Lord’s life upon earth into exceeding prominence, not in their mystical significance, but in their direct import as establishing a new relation between the creature and the Creator. To exaggerate the worth of this side of Truth was impossible; to make it exclusive, and so practically diminish its worth, was easy. Oftentimes the men of the sixteenth century, through the exclusiveness of this tendency, were obliged to adopt forced and unnatural methods of explaining the position of the Jewish fathers, which their reverence for Scripture, nay, which some of their own especial tendencies, led them to regard as most sacred. Naturally, therefore, they would be still more incapable of

* “In strict accordance with these assertions, I hold most firmly the doctrine of another (the 18th) Article. ‘That they are to be had accursed that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature. For Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the Name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved.’ I utterly deny that any sect, or any law, or any life framed in conformity therewith, can save a man. A light of nature is to me quite unintelligible. I receive, according to Scripture, Christ as the one Light of the world; and believe that all must be saved by Him. But whether the Reformers meant to deny that men have been saved by Christ who did not know him historically, I cannot tell; if they did, accepting their Article, I do not accept their sense of it.”

conceiving the relation in which those may have stood to the Divine economy, who were beyond the bounds of the covenant. But what may be an innocent oversight and inconsistency in one age, even the effect of some strong conviction, may become a hindrance to the faith of another. I feel strongly that our current opinions about the heathen world are not merely parts of a theory to be rejected for its narrowness and uncharitableness, but that they lead us to deny Divine truths greatly concerning our well-being, that they confuse us respecting the dealings of God, as set forth in Holy Scripture, and are continually driving young men of earnest minds into infidelity. Hence I count it a duty by all possible means, and especially when one is brought into connexion with those who are pursuing academical studies, to assert that doctrine which this Article is often supposed to deny, which in fact seems to me, for the reason I have given, not at variance with it, but a necessary deduction from it. Therefore, with heart and soul I have subscribed, and am ready to subscribe, the Article; with heart and soul I should reject the new test, even if it contained only the one condition of accepting the sense of the compilers.”—*The New Statute and Mr. Ward* (Oxford, J. H. Parker), pp. 19-25.

NOTE C.

The following passage from the “Confessions” will serve as an example of what I have said in the text:—
“Qui hæc dicunt nondum te intelligunt, O Sapientia Del, lux mentium; nondum intelligunt quomodo fiant quæ per te et in te fiunt; et conantur *æterna* sapere: sed adhuc in *præteritis* et *futuris* rerum motibus cor eorum volitat et adhuc vanum est. Quis tenebit illud et figet illud ut paullulùm stet, et paullulùm rapiat splendorem *semper stautis æternitatis*, et comparet cum temporibus nunquam stantibus, et videat esse incomparabilem, et videat longum tempus, nisi ex multis prætereuntibus motibus, qui simul extendi non possunt, longum non fieri; non autem præterire quidquam in æterno, sed totum esse præsens; nullum veró tempus totum esse præsens; et videat omne præteritum propelli ex futuro; et omne præteritum ex præterito consequi, et omne præteritum ac futurum ab eo quod semper est præsens creari et excurrere? Quis tenebit cor hominis ut stet et videat quomodo stans dictet futura et præterita tempora, nec futura nec præterita ætenitas.” (Confess. l. xi. c. 13.)

Augustin does not speak less decisively on this point in a popular discourse delivered long after he became a Bishop (Enarratio in Psalmum 102, Sermo 11, Vol. iv. p. 830). “Non enim aliud anni Dei et aliud ipse; sed anni Dei æternitas Dei est; æternitas ipsa Dei substantia est, quæ nihil habet mutabile; ibi nihil est præteritum quasi jam non sit; nihil est futurum quasi nondum sit; sed quicquid ibi est, non nisi est.”

These words certainly “throw an atmosphere of doubt” on that interpretation of the word Eternal which identifies it with endless; but in what respect do they differ from our daily Morning prayer, “in knowledge of whom standeth our eternal life?”

NOTE D.

It may seem to some that I have passed over the words in 1 John, c. ii. v. 25—“And this is the *promise* which he has promised us, even eternal life”—because I thought that they clashed with the other words which I have quoted. Not at all; for, first, it is not said that the promise has not been performed; and secondly, I never doubted that eternal life is the blessing which we are to desire in a future world; which we are to hope for there in its fulness. The prayer of St. Chrysostom with which we conclude our daily service asks that we may have in this world knowledge of God’s truth, and in the world to come that “eternal life” which standeth in this knowledge. The hope is perfectly consistent with the gift; one would be impossible without the other. But if eternal life is *identified* with future life its meaning disappears, and we have a vague dream of felicity in exchange for the substantial blessings which God holds out to us.

I have been accused of adapting my interpretation of eternal life to meet the Unitarians “half way.” The charge applies with tenfold force to the accusers. Those who make the rewards and punishments of a future world the great subject matter of Christianity, are not in half, but in the most thorough agreement with Dr.

Priestley and Mr. Belsham. That was their doctrine, that was their point of sympathy with the English Churchmen of the last century. If we have escaped in any degree from the habits of the time we owe it to the belief which our Catechism inculcates—that we “are brought into a state of salvation,” that we “have been made members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.”

NOTE E.

The following is the passage from Jerome to which I allude:—

“Porrò qui volunt supplicia aliquando finiri; et licet post multa tempora, tamen terminum habere tormenta, his utuntur testimoniis. Quum intravenit plenitudo Gentium tum omnis Israel salvus fiet. Et iterum conclusit Deus omnia sub peccato ut omnibus misereatur. Et in alio loco Sanctus loquitur: Iram Domini sustinebo, quia peccavi ei, donec justificet causam meam et auferat iudicium suum et educat me in lucern. Et rursum: Benedicam te, Domine, quoniam iratus es mihi. Avertisti faciem tuam a me et misertus es mei. DOMINUS quoque loquitur ad peccatorem: Quum ira furoris mei fuerit, rursus sanabo. Et hoc est quod in alio loco dicitur: Quàm grandis multitudo bonitatis tuæ, Domine, quam abscondisti timentibus te. Quæ omnia replicant, asseverare cupientes, post cruciatus et tormenta futura refrigeria: quæ nunc abscondenda sunt ab iis quibus timor utilis est, ut dum supplicia reformidant, peccare desistant. Quod nos Dei solius debemus scientiæ derelinquere, cujus non solùm misericordiæ sed tormenta in pondere sunt, et novit quem, quomodo, aut quamdiu debeat iudicare. Solùmque dicamus quod humanæ conveniat fragilitati; ‘Domine, ne in furore tuo arguas me neque in irâ tuâ corripas me.’ Et sicut diaboli et omnium negatorum et impiorum qui dixerunt in corde suo, ‘Non est Deus,’ credimus æterna tormenta: sic peccatorum atque impiorum et tamen Christianorum quorum opera in igne probanda sunt atque purganda moderatum arbitrantur et mixtam clementiæ sententiam Iudicis.”—(*Esaiæ Prophetæ Finis*, (Tom. v. p. 215.)

NOTE F.

That the words quoted from Jerome establish the existence of the greatest variety of opinion in the Church on this subject, I have the authority of Jeremy Taylor in the following curious passage. The weight of it is immensely increased by the fact that it occurs in a sermon in which he is anxious to make out the most terrible case respecting the future condition of men; one in which he has dwelt with the most minute particularity on the torments of hell. I put it in as evidence of that vacillation and contradiction to which I have referred as characteristic of those who try to dogmatize on the subject; still more of the looseness which they introduce into our apprehensions of that punishment which they look upon as the great deterring motive from sin:—

“Origen is charged by the ancient churches for saying, that after a long time the devils and the accursed souls shall be restored to the kingdom of God, and that after a long time again they shall be restored to their state, and so it was from their fall, and shall be for ever; and, it may be, that might be the meaning of Tertullian’s expression, of ‘crucratus non diuturni sed sempiterni.’ Epiphanius charges not the opinion upon Origen, and yet he was free enough in his animadversion and reproof of him; but St. Austin did, and confuted the opinion in his books *De Civitate Dei*. However, Origen was not the first that said, the pains of the damned should cease; Justin Martyr in his dialogue with Trypho expresses it thus: ‘Neither do I say that all the souls do die, for that indeed would be to the wicked again unlooked for: what then? The souls of the godly in a better place, of the wicked in a worse, do tarry the time of judgment; then they that are worthy shall never die again, but those that are designed to punishment shall abide so long as God please to have them to live and to be punished.’ But I observe that the primitive doctors were very willing to believe that the mercy of God would find out a period to the torment of accursed souls; but such a period, which should be nothing but eternal destruction, called by the Scripture the ‘second death.’ Only Origen (as I have observed)

is charged by St. Austin to have said, they shall return into joys, and back again to hell by an eternal revolution. But concerning the death of a wicked soul, and its being broken into pieces with fearful torments, and consumed with the wrath of God, they had entertained some different fancies very early in the church, as their sentences are collected by St. Jerome at the end of his commentaries upon Isaiah. And Irenæus* disputes it largely, ‘that they that are unthankful to God in this short life, and obey him not, shall never have an eternal duration of life in the ages to come,’—‘sed ipse se privat in sæculum sæculi perseverantia,—he deprives his soul of living to eternal ages;’ for he supposes an immortal duration not to be natural to the soul, but a gift of God, which he can take away, and did take away from Adam, and restored it again in Christ to them that believe in him and obey him: for the other; they shall be raised again to suffer shame and fearful torments; and according to the degree of their sins, so shall be continued in their sorrows; and some shall die, and some shall not die: the devil, and the beast, and they that worshipped the beast, and they that were marked with his character, these, St. John saith, ‘shall be tormented for ever and ever;’ he does not say so of all, but of some certain great criminals; ὅπως ἂν Θεὸς θέλῃ, all so long as God please,—some for ever and ever, and some not so severely; and whereas the general sentence is given to all wicked persons, to all on the left hand, to go into everlasting fire: it is answered that the fire indeed is everlasting, but not all that enters into it is everlasting, but only the devils for whom it was prepared, and others, more mighty criminals (according as St. John intimates): though also *everlasting* signifies only to the end of its proper period.

“Concerning this doctrine of theirs, so severe, and yet so moderated, there is less to be objected than against the supposed fancy of Origen; for it is a strange consideration to suppose an eternal torment to those to whom it was never threatened, to those who never heard of Christ, to those that lived probably well, to heathens of good lives, to ignorant and untaught people, to people surprised in a single crime, to men that die young in their natural follies and foolish lusts, to them that fall in a sudden gaiety and excessive joy, to all alike; to all infinite and eternal, even to unwarned people; and that this should be inflicted by God who infinitely loves his creatures, who died for them, who pardons easily, and pities readily, and excuses much, and delights in our being saved, and would not have us to die, and takes little things in exchange for great: it is certain that God’s mercies are infinite, and it is also certain that the matter of eternal torments cannot truly be understood; and when the schoolmen go about to reconcile the Divine justice to that severity, and consider why God punishes eternally a temporal sin, or a state of evil, they speak variously, and uncertainly, and unsatisfyingly.”—(*Christ’s Advent to Judgment*, Sermon 3.)

This passage from Taylor will, I should hope, convince English readers that the “most various, uncertain, and unsatisfying” doctrines respecting future punishment have not been unknown to the Church in any age; have not been confined to followers of Origen, could not be unknown to the translators of our Bible or the framers of our Articles. Gieseler says (Period 2, c. ii. 82) speaking of the time from A. D. 324-451: “Die Meinung von der unverlierbaren Besserungsfähigkeit aller vernünftigen Wesen, und der Endlichkeit der Hölenstrafen war so allgemein, auch im Abendlande, *und bei Gegnern des Origenes* verbreitet, das sie, wo nicht ohne den Einfluss der Origenistischen Schule entstanden doch von derselben ganz unabhängig geworden war.” “The opinion of the indestructible capacity of reformation in all rational creatures, and of the finiteness of the torments of hell, was so common, even in the West, and so diffused among opponents of Origen, that though it might not have sprung up without the influence of his school, yet had it become quite independent thereof.” No one, I believe, will refuse to accept Gieseler as an authority in a matter of fact. I quote him, first, to prove that a doctrine which is said to have been unknown to our Reformers, except in connection with Origen or the Anabaptists, gained a very great influence in the Church at an early period; secondly, to show how naturally a belief in purgatory was produced by the efforts to coerce the expression of this doctrine, and to condemn the authors of it.

I may add that there is a very remarkable passage in Gregory of Nyssa (close of the treatise *De Animâ et Resurrectione*) of which Taylor has taken no notice.

* Lib. ii., cap. 65.