

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

VARIOUS IDEAS OF HELL.

An exchange states that the learned Dr. Whiston, Sir Isaac Newton's friend, held that hell is situated on a comet. He is quoted as saying:

It seems to me that this theory, which you rightly say "must belong to me and me alone," does locate hell, the awful prison-house of the damned, in the fiery nucleus of some (perhaps yet undiscovered) comet of unthinkable size. In its wide-circling chariot of fire they will be whirled in the twinkling of an eye from the intolerable heat of the sun back into space hundreds and hundreds of millions of miles from the great torch-bearer of our system. Thus instantly the wretched tenant will be given two unbearable extremes, one of cold and the other of heat. This is to continue through endless ages of eternity.

Young Stilling, whose thoughts on unearthly subjects are of the most original and unique nature, located the final place of punishment in the interior of the earth, where he supposed the passions of the damned would constantly flash from their bodies, like electric sparks, making the place a veritable lake of fire, burning and not consuming.

Emanuel Swedenborg does not clearly locate the place of torment relative to the visible universe. His theory was that, after the fall, wicked men, when dead, combined into infernal societies, each one being drawn to the companions with which his inclinations were most in harmony. In this way the various hells originated and grew in power and influence and threatened the very existence of the heavens, until God assumed humanity and conquered the evil influence, thus restoring order in heaven and facilitating the transition from earth to the place of the blessed. According to this mystic writer there are three classes of hells or infernal societies. In the lowest self-love is the dominant principle; in the next, self-derived wisdom, and in the highest, self-service. Between these hells and the heavens is an intermediate state, he thinks, into which all enter at the time of death. Here they stay long enough to decide for themselves in what company they will spend eternity. Ministering angels are ready to render any service needed, but notwithstanding this, many prefer to go to hell, their habits and thoughts and feelings on earth having created in them a desire for the impure society of wicked men and women and fallen angels, which they prefer to the pure societies of good men and angels. But even in the hells, by the mercy of God, he says, the condition of the fallen is somewhat ameliorated and they are never entirely beyond the possibility of redemption. The indescribably happy marriage relation is one of the characteristics of heavenly societies, while promiscuity is the rule in the infernal communities.

A new view of hell has recently been advanced by an American lady writer. She represents a man who in a dream talks with his ancestors. One of these says he was

an inhabitant of the place of torment, though there was no such place as commonly understood. His hell consisted in the condition of his feelings. He had no interest in anything any more. He felt no enjoyment, no ambition, no pleasure, no passions, no desires. He could go to heaven, if he wanted to, but he was not interested in anything. This idea is decidedly novel and may have been suggested by the fact that overindulgence in sensual pleasures is known to lead a person to the verge of that condition already in this life. Others have suggested, and with more force of reasoning, that the main torment consists in a burning desire for the pleasures of earth without the power or opportunity of satisfying them.

The scriptural doctrine on this point may be summed up in the brief statement that a man will certainly reap according to that which he soweth. Holy writ does not enter into geographical descriptions of the world of spirits, nor does it detail the conditions of the wicked. But in solemn terms and with unmistakable earnestness it announces the fact that a life completed in the violation of the laws of God will lead to a state of misery hereafter. Daniel says some shall awake to everlasting life and others to "shame" and "everlasting contempt," a statement confirming the saying of Isaiah: "Their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." The same language is employed by the Savior, and it derived its significance from the existence in the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, of Gehenna, the place where the garbage of the city was kept burning constantly. The doctrine is plainly taught that a man's life after this is but a continuation of his life on earth; that divine justice is meted out with rigid impartiality. The condition of the wicked is referred to as "death" and the place as "hell," over which the "devil" is the ruler. But this prince will finally have to surrender his power to the Almighty, when he himself together with both death and hell are to be cast into "the lake of fire and brimstone," the last destination of those who have not been saved on earth nor after their departure from earth, and whose names at the last judgment, consequently, are not found in the Lamb's book of life. "Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire."

In the revelation on this subject given to Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon on February 16, 1832, the persons referred to as finally lost are more fully explained, but as to their fate it is plainly stated that "the end thereof, neither the place thereof, nor their torment, no man knows. Neither was it revealed, neither is, neither will be revealed unto man, except to them who are made partakers thereof." It is therefore safe to say that all speculations and theories about the location of hell and the condition of the damned are idle. The fact that sin brings punishment is revealed. The

nature thereof no man clearly comprehend.

SOCIALISM CONSIDERED.

Among the most prominent questions of the day are those bearing on social reforms in various directions. They are agitated among the laboring classes in every civilized country and discussed in the leading magazines and newspapers of the world. The discussion of theological subtleties, in which former ages were so deeply interested, has in the main been abandoned as profitless, from a material point of view, or left to the learned occupants of the pulpits. Long established forms of the social structure are losing the sanctity with which they were once regarded and people demand reforms with no uncertain sound.

As yet the difficulty is in finding something practical, some feasible plan upon which to effect the desired change. The cool fact is that society as it is organized today is the natural growth of preceding conditions. It is not the creation of some one with the view of oppressing one class and favoring others. Tyrants, it is true, the world has had, and still has, but their exploits among the nations have always been of comparatively brief duration. History teaches plainly that even the most oppressed people will some time rise in its majesty and crush the usurpers in the dust, and as far as possible right the wrongs inflicted. The existing defects, whatever they may be, can therefore not be looked upon or treated as mere incidentals, as easy to remove as a grain of sand from the eye or a splinter from a finger. They are rather constitutional, and require treatment accordingly.

The various theories of socialism, communism, anarchism and nihilism propose remedies whereby an ideal society may be formed. Socialists in general aim at what they call a just distribution of the wealth of the earth among its inhabitants. The state, they think, ought to control all the means whereby a country is supported and see that none accumulates an undue proportion thereof while others are suffering. They reason from the supposition that wealth is the product of "labor," leaving out of consideration the element of "ability," which others regard as even more essential in the development of the natural resources. They disclaim any revolutionary tendencies and insist that their social ideas are the natural consequence of the doctrines of democracy.

The anarchists find the reforms suggested by the socialists inadequate. They do not ascribe the ills of which they complain to any particular form of society, but to society itself. Their idea is to annihilate all social structures and to set each man free—free as the beasts of the field, who know of no government, no social relations. The means whereby this is to be effected is the brutal force. Many of them openly advocate the destruction of accumulated wealth and the assassination of all who attempt to guard the lives and property of their fellowmen. It takes only a moment's reflection upon what the condition of the world would be without laws, without so-