

and sinners. Again and again men are warned against a "wrath to come" just as plainly as they are assured of a future bliss, if they keep the commandments of God. Both these future conditions are clearly revealed in sacred writ. Indeed, so prominent in the word of God is the doctrine of a future retribution that the various expounders of the creeds have always considered it an essential part of revealed religion.

The ideas, however, about the nature of a future retribution used only a few years ago to be very crude among Christian professors, notwithstanding the declarations set forth in the Bible upon the subject. It was no uncommon thing among the Pietists of Germany in their various subdivisions to paint a hell in which wicked persons were to be boiled in cauldrons filled with pitch and brimstone. But such crude notions have, fortunately, had to give way to more enlightened views. There is probably not one preacher to be found now who would entertain his hearers with such blood-curdling tales about a literally burning hell, as did some of the old school.

But concerning the duration of future punishment, the majority of the "Christian" world are still in darkness. The idea that the mercy of God extends beyond the grave, and that His saving power will be exerted even in the shades of Hades, is still held to be a damnable heresy.

It is a matter of much comfort and consolation that God, in this last dispensation, through his servant Joseph the Prophet, has revealed the truth concerning the duration as well as, to some extent, the nature of the retribution to come. Through this great Prophet eternity has been opened to human gaze and we can rejoice in the infinite mercy of God, who is not only able but also willing to extend His plan of salvation to both dead and living, until every foe has been conquered and every intelligent being gives honor and praise and glory to Him who lives for ever and ever.

But the majority of so-called "Christians" refuse to believe the revelations given through the prophets of this dispensation, and they ask for proofs from the books of the Bible. It may, therefore, be well to refer to what those ancient records reveal about the nature and duration of a future retribution.

Three words are found in the New Testament to denote the punishment to be inflicted hereafter. Greek

scholars tell us that the first of these words (*kolasis*) denotes intense pain or "smart." The second word (*ekdikesis*) is retribution for outraged justice. And the third word (*timoria*, occurring only once) means retribution for outraged honor. A comparison of the passages in which these words are found reveals the fact that the retribution that will overtake the wicked is the natural and unavoidable consequence of their disregard for the supreme justice and honor of the Creator, shown in disobedience to His commandments. These consequences follow inevitably, as effects from causes.

This future punishment is referred to as "the second death," "destruction," etc. The wicked are said to be "destroyed," "lost," "dead." But what do these terms really mean in the New Testament? We read that unconverted men are already on the earth "dead" in sins. The prodigal was "lost" until he returned home. The antediluvian world was "destroyed" by the flood. In none of these passages can "death" or "destruction" mean either annihilation or endless torment. It is clear, beyond dispute, that unconverted men on earth, although they are declared to be "dead," have not been annihilated, nor are they in endless torment. The prodigal was surely not annihilated while he was wandering in the foreign land. Nor were the antediluvians annihilated by the flood, since Christ preached to them in prison after a lapse of 2000 years, or more. All these were living beings, still within the reach of saving mercy, although in Bible language, they are said to be "dead," "destroyed," etc.

If we now follow the well-known rule of Protestant interpretation and allow Scripture to be explained by Scripture, we see at once that future retribution in all its unfathomable awfulness is, neither annihilation nor endless torment. Those who are "cast into hell" are no more annihilated than they were while living upon this earth; they are "destroyed," but they are no more outside of the reach of their Father's mercy than were the world "destroyed" in the flood.

Those who look upon future punishment as endless torment argue that the punishment of the wicked is always referred to as an eternal punishment, and that the meaning of the word eternal can be nothing but *endless*. When the word is used to describe the happiness of the

Saints or the qualities of God, it must be taken as indicating an endless duration of time. Why should it denote something else when used to denote the punishment of sinners? The derivation of the word, (from *aei*, ever, and *einai*, to be), it is further argued shows, it to mean nothing but everlasting. To this we briefly reply, that the word "eternal;" according to its derivation in Greek means everlasting, may, perhaps, be true, although the above derivation has been questioned by many etymologists. But even if it does it is certain that the word eternal is in many passages applied to earthly objects that pass away. And it must be noted that the word eternal often does not refer to *duration* of time at all. It is often used as the opposite to that which pertains to this life, much as the word spiritual is used as the opposite of material. Speaking of the eternal blessedness of the Saints, the Scriptures often mean a bliss to be enjoyed in eternity. And in the same way, "eternal" punishment means a punishment to be suffered in eternity as distinguished from punishment inflicted in this life. It is strange that this fact should ever have been overlooked.

But the declaration of the Apostle Paul should settle the controversy for ever: "For He (Christ) must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be abolished is death * * that God may be all in all."

If this passage does not teach that Christ shall reign in order that He may reclaim from death its victims, and that there is a glorious work to be done for the dead, then we fail to perceive any meaning at all in this comprehensive passage.

But it evidently means that God shall become *all in all* and that death itself shall, finally be abolished.

So far the teachings of the Bible are plain on the subject under consideration. But the full meaning of the expression "eternal punishment," is given nowhere so clearly as in the Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 19, 5-12. Eternal punishment is, in this passage, declared to be "God's punishment," as God Himself is eternal. The punishment itself is always existing, but the terms of the transgressors differ as their sins differ. Men who have chosen to violate the laws of God will suffer this punishment, but each one according to the nature of his offense. For God is just in all His dealings with His children.