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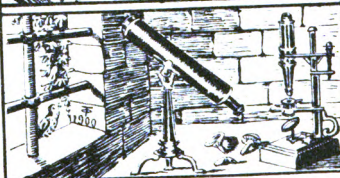
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THE LARGER HOPE.

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THE LARGER HOPE.

A SEQUEL TO
SALVATOR MUNDI.

By SAMUEL COX, D.D.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
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THE LARGER HOPE.



INTRODUCTION.

SINCE the publication of 'Salvator Mundi' I have carefully refrained from any rehandling of its main theme. And I have refrained from this theme, not because I had nothing more, or nothing new, to say upon it, and still less because 'the larger hope' has in any way grown questionable to me; but simply for the two following reasons:—(1) I have been waiting for some good, some able and fair-minded, book on the other side of the question, such as would call for reply; and (2) I

have been anxious not to suffer any one truth to absorb an undue share of attention, and so to lead me to violate what St. Paul calls 'the *proportion* of the faith.'

No such book has appeared, however; or, if it has, I have not been so happy as to meet with it.* And I cannot condescend to argue with scholars who, like Dean Goulburn,† cite from Ecclesiastes (xi. 3) the phrase, 'Where the tree falleth there shall it be,' in proof of the everlasting punishment of the wicked, when they

* I have not forgotten Dr. Pusey's 'What is of Faith?' or that, however defective its argument, however dogmatic its tone, it is worthy, if only for its author's sake, of all respect. But I do not formally reply to it, (1) because, in so far as it treats of the Scripture argument, it has been abundantly answered by Canon Farrar, in 'Mercy and Judgment;' and because (2) if the argument advanced in these pages be as sound as I take it to be, it wholly cuts the ground occupied by Dr. Pusey from under his feet, and leaves his argument hanging in the air.

† 'Everlasting Punishment,' p. 30.

must know both that the Preacher had no such dogma in any of his thoughts; and that, if he had framed any conception of the future life, it would carry no more authority for us than his cynical and self-contradictory conceptions of the present life. Nor do I see how any man who respects himself can bring himself to argue with divines who suggest—and here Dean Goulburn is again a conspicuous offender—that only those doubt the fires of hell to be ever-during who deserve to be flung into them. But, I trust, I run no danger of violating the proportion of faith, if, now that five or six years have elapsed, I revert to this great theme in order (1) to suggest a new statement of it, (2) a new argument for it, and (3) a new New-Testament illustration of it.

CHAPTER I.

A NEW STATEMENT OF IT.

MUCH depends on the form in which any question is stated ; and if I were now taking up this question for the first time, I should not state it, I think, as a part of the New Testament teaching on Future Punishment, but as part of the Christian doctrine of Atonement, as helping us to define the scope and extent of the Sacrifice which Christ offered up once for all. For, if it were thus stated, men would see at once that we who entertain 'the larger hope' believe, not less, but more, than our brethren who hold on to the traditional and accepted view. They would see that

the one vital point of difference between us is, that, while our brethren hold the redemption of Christ to extend only to the life that now is, and to take effect only on some men, we maintain, on the contrary, that it extends to the life to come, and must take effect on all men at the last.

And I should now prefer to state the question thus, not simply nor mainly because it would be the more gracious and acceptable way of stating it, but also and chiefly because it represents more fairly the line of thought along which we have travelled to our conclusion, and renders it almost impossible for honest men to fall into a misapprehension which now prejudices their minds against the conclusion we have reached. For, in talking over this subject with good and thoughtful men, I have found that their main difficulty in accepting our interpretation of the New

Testament Scriptures springs from the fear that it makes light of sin—that it does not sufficiently recognize the guilt of men and the necessity of the punishments that wait on transgression. Now, speaking for myself, I think it hardly possible that any man should believe more profoundly than I do either in the guilt of sin, the frightful depravation and loss it inflicts, or in the universal depravity of men. No one can well be more sure than I am both that, here or hereafter, every man must and will receive the due recompense of his sins, or that it is well for us that we should receive that recompense. I do not believe in ‘the total depravity of man,’ indeed, if that phrase is intended to mean that every man is *wholly* depraved — that no element of goodness, no spark of virtue, remains in any part of his being ; nor do I understand how any one, who has seen how much good

there is even in the worst of his fellows, can bring himself to believe in it. But if 'total depravity' only means 'universal depravity,' if it means only that every man has broken the law of God and fallen short of his glory, I can go a long way beyond such a definition as this. For I not only believe that all men are guilty before God, even the best, in the sense that there is no man who has not violated the Divine law and come short of the Divine ideal; I also believe that, varying and inferior as are the ideals of goodness which men have framed for themselves, no man has ever yet reached his own ideal or lived up to his own law. In the most emphatic sense the words of the Apostle are true: 'All have sinned'—sinned against their own conscience—'and have come short of the glory of God,' *i.e.* sinned also against the Divine standard of right and wrong.

And how can any man who goes through life with open eyes doubt that punishment as surely dogs the heels of sin as cause is followed by effect? For myself, I not only believe that, sooner or later, every sin must receive its due punishment, but rejoice to know it. For I hold that the law which connects punishment with sin is a most gracious law, a law full of promise rather than of threatening, since it is by the sufferings which wait on sin that God commonly alienates us from our sins, and delivers us from the cruel bondage into which they have reduced us: and who would not be content to suffer the full punishment of his sins, if he may thus be saved out of the hand of his sins?

Still, so long as we argue for *the non-eternity* of future punishment, as if that were the matter we chiefly had in mind, we do not do justice to these other beliefs

of ours—to our belief in the universal depravity of man, in the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and in the inevitable punishment of iniquity. We are understood to be making as little of sin, and of punishment, as we can ; or, if we are not thus misunderstood, we are thus misrepresented, even by dignitaries of the Church who all the while know very well, or might and ought to know, what we do mean and what we do not. It is but a small thing, indeed, to be misrepresented by men who, while contending for the guilt of sin and the certainty of punishment, seem to have but a slight sense of their own sin in bearing false witness against their brethren, and but little fear of that judgment which is to ‘begin with the household of God.’ But these misrepresentations cloud and prejudice the minds of many who desire the truth, and who are longing to believe in

the mercy of the Divine judgments if they honestly can. And, therefore, it behoves as many of us as believe in that Mercy to state the conclusion to which we have been led in a way which renders such misrepresentations very difficult, if not impossible.

Instead, then, of making the non-eternity of future punishment our main theme and contention, let the Cross of Christ be the banner under which we fight. Let us maintain that the Atonement made by Him, as it was intended for all, so also must it extend to all, since even the sin of man cannot render the purpose of God of none effect. Let it be known that what we contend for is the efficacy and the scope of that Divine Sacrifice. Let us affirm the universal sinfulness of man as strongly as we can, and the horrible guilt of his sins, and the infallible certainty of the punish-

ment of his sins. And then let us argue that the very extent of his sin, and its terrible guilt, and its certain punishment, do but magnify the Redemption which embraces the whole race, atones for every sin, and transforms the very punishments which wait on sin into a saving discipline by which the power of sin is for ever broken and overcome.

If I could now reshape my argument, I confess that I should make it spring from the conviction that the Son of God must 'see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied : ' and that He who came to seek and save the lost cannot be 'satisfied' until He has recovered every lost soul wandering in the wilderness of disobedience to his will, or wrapt in dark mists of ignorance and unbelief which prevent it from seeing what that will is.

CHAPTER II.

A NEW ARGUMENT FOR IT.

BUT while I think I should state my thesis in a different form, less open to misconception, I have also to report that, since my book was written, I have found an argument in support of its conclusion which, to my own mind, is far more weighty and cogent than any I then had at command. I retract none of the arguments I did use. I have seen no reason to doubt even one of the interpretations on which I then relied. I still hold that the passages then adduced from the New Testament are amply sufficient to carry every conclusion I based

upon them. But, as I then confessed, I am not one of those who care to lean heavily on isolated texts, or even on any accumulation of them. Principles are more than texts ; the spirit of the Bible more than the letter. And, in addition to the arguments I then drew from the spirit and principles, as well as from the letter and word of the New Testament, I have since discovered one so large in its scope, and of a force so convincing, that I could be well content to rest upon it, even if all other arguments had—as they have not—to be given up. Stated as briefly as possible, that argument runs thus :—

The great prediction of the Old Testament was the advent of the Messiah, the coming of the Christ to fulfil the law and to save the world. We all remember with what persistence the prophets of Israel recurred to this great hope, and with what

pomp of language and circumstance they invested it: and we all know how the Jews interpreted this great prediction, how erroneously and misleadingly. Nevertheless, I do not see how any honest student of the prophetical Scriptures is to deny that the language in which this great hope was decked out warranted the expectation cherished by the Jews—that the Messiah, when He came, would appear as a great and victorious Monarch who would restore the kingdom to Israel, and extend that kingdom till it embraced the whole world. If we read them fairly, it is impossible to evade the conclusion, that there was much in them to suggest and confirm the expectation of the Jews, though we now know that expectation to have been a mistaken form of the Messianic hope.

Made wise by the event, we can detect, under the surface current of magnificent

images which prompted them to look for a temporal monarch seated at Jerusalem and reducing the whole Gentile world under his sway, an under-current of prediction which pointed to a suffering Messiah who, by the sacrifice of Himself, was gradually to win a spiritual empire in which there should be neither Jew nor Greek, neither bond nor free, but all should become one new man. But, had we lived before the event, is it certain, is it at all likely even, if at least we had read the Old Testament as we read the New, that we should have discovered this under-current of spiritual thought and prediction? Are not the probabilities at least a thousand to one that, like the great bulk of the Jews, we should have indulged in fond dreams of a great King and Conqueror, with an empire whose centre would be at Jerusalem but its circumference as wide as the world?

It is impossible, I think, to doubt that in the Old Testament Scriptures there were two currents of thought or meaning about the Saviour who was to come : a surface current, that pointed to a great temporal kingdom into which all nations were to be drawn ; and a deeper current, running right in the opposite direction, and pointing to a spiritual redemption in virtue of which the spirits of all flesh would be subdued and reconciled to God. The Jews who floated on the surface-current, and looked for a temporal Messiah, were the vast majority of the race. That majority included the rabbis and priests—all the dignitaries of the ancient Church ; their reading of the Prophets was the accepted, the orthodox, reading. Only a few men, poor, unlettered, and despised, were gradually taught to look for and accept the Man of Sorrows who was to make his soul an offering for sin,

that by his stripes we might be healed. And yet it was these poor and unlettered men who proved to be in the right ; their reading proved to be the true reading ere all was done.

This is a fact, I think, which no man will question ; and a fact from which we ought to learn a lesson of the gravest moment. That lesson I take to be that, wherever we discern two currents of thought pulsing through Scripture, and seeming to flow in opposite directions, we ought to prefer the deeper and more spiritual current—that which gives us the largest outlook, and authenticates itself to us as the more likely because the more divine.

Now, if we apply this lesson, this inference, to the New Testament Scriptures, there can be no doubt as to whither it will lead us. For here, in the New Testament, strange to say, we have the same curious

phenomenon as in the Old. That is to say, we have a great prediction, a great hope ; and this hope is so presented to us as to lie fairly open to two very different interpretations. The great prediction of the New Testament is the *second* advent of Christ, as that of the Old Testament was his first advent ; his coming to *judge*, that is, to rule, the world which of old He came to redeem. If we read the New Testament fairly, without bias or prepossession, how can we escape the conclusion that it points to a judgment in which the righteous will be finally separated from the unrighteous ; that these two, the sheep and the goats, will pass from the judgment-seat of Christ into worlds separated from each other by a great gulf, so that even those who *would* pass from the one to the other will not be able ; and that hence the wicked and impenitent will be condemned to an

everlasting misery and shame and contempt? That, surely, is a fair summary of the first impression which the prophetic Scriptures of the New Testament leave upon the mind. It is, as no one can deny, the impression which has been left on the mind of the Church, or of the vast majority of the Church, in every age. And there is just as much warrant for it in the writings of the New Testament as there was in the writings of the Old Testament for that expectation of a temporal Messiah which was entertained by a vast majority of the Jews.

Yes, there is just as much warrant for it, and just as little. For no sooner do we begin to look at the New Testament more closely, than, beneath its surface-current of meaning, we detect glimpses of a deeper and more spiritual meaning. Of this under-current we become conscious as we consider all those passages which affirm the

universal extent and the universal efficacy of the Redemption wrought by Christ ; or which imply that the love of God is more than all our sins, an eternal unchangeable love, that does not alter where it alteration finds ; or in which an inspired Apostle argues that 'all Israel shall be saved,' and that 'the fulness of the Gentiles shall be brought in,' declares that 'the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable,' or concludes that God has 'shut up all men in unbelief, that He may have mercy upon all.'*

I confess I do not understand how any unprejudiced reader of the New Testament can deny that *both* these strains of thought are to be found in it. And if both *are* in it, our only alternative is to determine by which of the two we will take our stand, with which we will throw in our lot. If we are wise, if we have learned the lesson

* See 'Salvator Mundi,' ch. viii.

taught by the great and terrible mistake of the Jews—a mistake which led them to reject the very Hope and Consolation of Israel—we shall side with the deeper meaning, with the diviner thought, with the larger hope. We shall have learned that the more profound and spiritual interpretation of the Word of God is likely to be the truer interpretation. And so when we read, ‘I, if I be lifted up, will draw *all men* unto me,’* or, ‘The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of *the world*,’† or, ‘to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord *both of the dead and of the living*,’‡ or, ‘God our Saviour wills that *all men* should be saved,’§—when we read these and similar passages, and are compelled to elect between the wider and the narrower meaning

* John xii. 32.

† 1 John iv. 14.

‡ Romans xiv. 9.

§ 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4.

of them, we shall not hesitate in our choice ; and having made it, we shall wait patiently for time and the event to justify the better part and the wider interpretation which we have chosen. As I would like to have stood with those who read the Old Testament prediction in its larger and more spiritual sense, so I rejoice to stand with the comparatively few who now read in its larger and more spiritual sense the great prediction and hope of the Gospel.

Now this, to my mind, is a weighty and conclusive argument, an argument drawn from the general tenour and animating spirit of Holy Writ, and not from any private interpretation of particular passages. Standing on this, we stand as on a rock from which we can be dislodged by none of the changeful winds of criticism, by no wave of Church censure or theological opinion.

For, in thus committing ourselves to that deeper current of revelation which implies the redemption of the whole world and the final and complete victory of good over evil, we are not only confirmed by the mistaken Messianic interpretation of the Jews, and by the general tenour of Scripture; we also have on our side the sanction of Experience and Science. What is there in the universe which *is* what it seems to us to be at first? What science is there in which the phenomena do not point in one direction, while the underlying facts and realities point in another? Where would astronomy be if we still believed that the sun spins round the earth as it seems to do? and where history if we looked only at the events recorded in the newspapers? Does light *seem to be* only an undulation? do the pure and splendid colours on which our

eyes feast *seem to be* but vibrations reflected at different ratios from the variously angled surfaces of flower and cloud? Look into what 'fact' we will, and we find that it is not a fact, but only an impression which the real unseen fact makes on our senses. And if throughout the universe, and before we can arrive at any real knowledge, we must get beneath the surface, and correct our first impressions by a deeper apprehension of the objects on which we look, what wonder is it that the same law holds in the true interpretation of the Bible? Would it not, rather, be most wonderful if that law did *not* hold—if in our study of the words of God we were not compelled to that very process of revision and correction of our first impressions to which we are constrained so often as we study the works of his hands?

CHAPTER III.

NEW TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION
OF IT.

IF there were any passage in the New Testament which distinctly affirmed that the wicked and impenitent, when they die, would be 'delivered unto the devil;' if, moreover, the passage went on to assert that, after a solemn session of judgment, they would be delivered into his hands for 'destruction;' and if this passage still went on to declare that the awful sentence which consigned them to that horrible fate would be pronounced by the Lord Jesus Christ, and ratified or countersigned by the Apostle

Paul ;—if, I say, any such passage as this were to be found within the covers of the New Testament, which of us could any longer cherish the faintest hope of their ultimate salvation? Should we not say, ‘If they are given up by the Lord Jesus, who came into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved; and if the Apostle, who was ready to be accursed from Christ that his brethren might be saved by Christ, also gives them up, we must give them up too. We can cherish no further hope for them. However dear they may have been to us, we must leave them, we have no alternative but to leave them, in the cruel hands into which they have been consigned.’

I do not see how we can doubt that such a passage, a passage so dreadful and so explicit, would have robbed us of our last

lingering hope for those of our friends and neighbours who, in these brief hours of time, had not exercised repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. For most of us *have* been driven to conclusions of despair by words far less conclusive than these. There are passages in the New Testament, for example, which describe the future punishment of the impenitent sinner as an undying and quenchless fire, and we know how these passages have been construed, how we ourselves once construed them. And destruction is only one function of fire, and that not the chief function or the commonest. Fire creates ; fire nourishes ; fire develops ; fire blesses, as well as destroys. The fire stored up in the earth burns on our hearths, and forms the sacred centre of our homes. To the fire stored up in the sun we owe our harvests, our life itself, owe all the power

and beauty of the world around us. Even where fire does destroy, it also liberates, cleanses, disinfects. And yet, despite all these gracious analogies, we have conceived of the fire of Gehenna, not as purging the souls of men from the taints of sin, nor as releasing the vital and immortal elements of their nature from its vile crust and mortal coil in order that these may be recombined in new forms or recreated in some loftier image, but only as stinging their whole being with intolerable pangs, only as playing destructively on their immortal spirits for ever and for ever. Although the Lord Jesus Himself has taught us that, just as 'every sacrifice must be salted with salt,' so 'every man must be *salted with fire*;' and although the holy Apostle has spoken of some souls as '*saved so as by fire*,' we have refused to see in the punitive fires kindled by sin any single element of redemption.

And if, when we read of men who have fallen into a fire ‘prepared,’ not for them, but ‘for the devil and his angels,’ we lose all hope of them, how much more should we lose hope were we to read that, after a solemn act of judgment, they were to be formally sentenced by the Judge and Saviour of men to be delivered into the hands of those for whom it *was* prepared, in order that they might be destroyed; and that this sentence had been submitted to the Apostles, and to the Church, before it was pronounced, and had met with hearty and universal concurrence, not even a single voice pleading for mitigation or delay! I find it quite impossible to doubt that, had such a passage been discovered in the New Testament, we should have felt it to be quite conclusive; and should have been constrained to admit that such a sentence, so pronounced and so ratified,

could mean nothing less than the everlasting punishment, or, at lowest, the utter destruction of those on whom it had been passed.

And yet—O wonderful mercy of God !—it would *not* have been conclusive after all. Qualifications might have been latent in it that were not expressed. It might even have meant the very opposite of that which we should have taken it to mean—life, not death ; not everlasting shame, but an eternal salvation. To be sure of that, we have only to turn to St. Paul's first Epistle to the Corinthians. In chapter v. of that Epistle, he is speaking of 'the wicked person,' who had shamed the Church and wronged his own soul by a sin so rare and so exceptional that vice itself had no name for it.* In the second verse he complains

* For a study of this man's sin, sentence, and absolution, see 'The Expositor,' First Series, vol. iii. pp. 355 *et seq.*

that the Church at Corinth had neither mourned over nor punished that unspeakable sin. In verse 3 he declares that he himself, present in spirit, though absent in body, had already judged him who had done this deed. And in verses 4 and 5 he gives a solemn formula of excommunication, couched in these singular words: *'When ye are gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and my spirit, with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, is with you, [then] deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus.'*

For the present we need not perplex ourselves with the many and most difficult questions which this strange formula has suggested. It is enough to mark that here is a Christian man who, though guilty of

a sin for which even the heathen had no name, has not repented of his sin. On this wicked person the Church is to sit in judgment. At this solemn session of the Church the Lord Jesus Christ is to be present in power. St. Paul is also to be present in spirit. And the sentence of the Lord Jesus, of St. Paul, and of the whole Church is to be, that the man who has done this deed shall be 'delivered unto Satan,' and delivered to him for 'destruction.' Had the sentence paused there—as, in the abbreviated utterances of the New Testament, it might well have paused—what possible hope could we any of us have entertained for this wicked and impenitent Corinthian? Must we not have concluded that he was 'lost,' and lost for ever? that any recovery, and, still more, any speedy recovery to life, health, peace, was altogether out of the question? Never-

theless—as in this case, happily, we may see for ourselves—it was not the damnation of the man which this awful sentence had in view, but his salvation. He was delivered unto Satan for ‘destruction of the flesh’ only for the express end that ‘his spirit might be *saved* in the day of the Lord Jesus !’

Now, whatever may be meant by ‘the destruction of the flesh’—and I will suggest a possible meaning of that phrase presently—so much as this is plain : that even to be ‘delivered unto Satan’ does not necessarily imply the utter and final loss of the human soul. Destruction itself may be the very condition of salvation. The Church may condemn a man to what seems to us utter perdition, and the Apostle may condemn him, and Christ Himself may condemn him, and that by a solemn and formal act of judgment ; and yet he

may thus be condemned only in order that he may at last be delivered and redeemed.

This wretched Corinthian *was*, as we know, redeemed by his very condemnation, and delivered *from* the power of the devil by being delivered *into* the power of the devil. Within a few months we find St. Paul himself pleading with the Church for his restoration to their fellowship and love ; beseeching them to be content with the punishment he had already endured, lest he should be swallowed up in the swelling waters of his penitence and shame ; assuring them that both he and Christ *had* already forgiven the penitent and stricken sinner ; nay, even warning them that, should they prove hard and unrelenting, Satan might get some advantage over *them*, and they themselves might fall under the power of that evil spirit into

whose power they had abandoned their erring brother.*

But if destruction may be a condition of salvation in this life, and if being delivered to Satan may be a means of being delivered from Satan, and if the condemnation of Christ may be his last and most effectual method of quickening the impenitent to penitence, who dare say that these punitive methods of the Divine Grace will not produce the selfsame happy results in the life to come? Unless there be some clear revelation to the contrary, it is but reasonable to assume that they must and will have the same or similar results. And if we have already found in the New Testament that under-current of deeper meaning of which I have spoken, and which points to the ultimate recovery of all souls, must we not conclude that the very pains of

* 2 Cor. ii. 6-11.

hell will prove to be the fire by which men must be 'salted,' *i.e.* recovered from corruption to incorruption, turned from death to life, delivered from the power of Satan into the saving and recreating hands of God?

CHAPTER IV.

DEMONIACAL POSSESSION.

I MAY now leave this illustration, I think, to speak for itself, and pass on to suggest a meaning in St. Paul's formula of excommunication * which is not without its bearing on the theme before us, but which I touch upon mainly to meet a very difficult question which this formula has raised : viz. What was the punishment inflicted on 'that wicked person'? What did the Apostle mean by 'delivering such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh'?

* 1 Cor. v. 4, 5.

and how should that destruction tend or conduce to 'the salvation of the spirit'?

In general, we may say that the punishments of sin are very commonly used by God as a means of redeeming men from the power of sin. But if we would master St. Paul's special application of that general principle, we must read his Epistles in the light of the Gospels.

Now, in the Gospels, we frequently meet with cases of demoniacal possession. The Evangelic Narratives constantly assume that, if men give place to the devil, he will enter into them, *haunt* them, animate and actuate them, convert all their powers to his own use, till their very sense of personal identity becomes confused, and whether it is they or the devil in them that acts and speaks they cannot tell. One naturally shrinks from any searching analysis of these diseased, morbid, and monstrous states of

the soul : that way madness lies. But quite apart from any such perilous analysis, we may note two phenomena of 'possession' which lie on the very surface. The one is, that it everywhere tends to the destruction of the flesh ; and the other, that it produces a tremulous, easily stirred, yet passionate sensibility of spirit. All the demoniacs of whom we get glimpses in the Gospels betray the suicidal mania : they cut and tear themselves ; they fling themselves into the fire and into the water ; they exhaust themselves in struggles with the chains and fetters with which they are bound.* And, on the other hand, the mere presence of the holy Son of God stirs them with unwonted force. They feel his purity with a sensitiveness and a depth unknown to their neighbours. His presence at once excites and calms them. It quick-

* St. Mark v. 4, 5 ; and ix. 18, 20, 22.

ens in them the only hope of deliverance they know. If, as they enter that Presence, the devil in them tears them till they wallow, foaming, at his feet, the man in them leaps up to implore help and salvation.

In short, for I do not want to say a word more than is necessary on a theme so awful, we see in them the very tendencies which St. Paul embodies in his formula of excommunication; the flesh is destroyed, the spirit is quickened and aroused. Now, if we accept the New Testament as a revelation from God, we cannot but believe that the Apostles exercised over the possessed the very power constantly ascribed to Christ Himself, and not the Apostles only, but many other members of the primitive Church. They, too, cast out devils. But those who can deliver men from the power of the devil can also, if they will, deliver men into his power. They have 'authority'

over evil spirits—authority both to bind and to loose. And hence I conclude that the sentence pronounced on the Corinthian sinner was a sentence which exposed him to demoniacal possession.* His punishment for having given place to the devil, by a sin so rare and enormous that it had no name, was to be ‘possessed’ by the devil whom he had served ; to have his flesh wasted and destroyed by that bosom tyrant, in order that his impenitent spirit might be coerced into penitence ; that he might learn to loathe the bondage into which he had sold himself, and the sin under whose power he had fallen ; that he might become more sensitive to all spiritual influences, adverse and benign, and come to feel as he had never felt before, that Christ alone could

* For this explanation of St. Paul’s difficult formula, as for much other teaching and comfort of the Scriptures, I am indebted to Rev. G. Matheson, D.D., of Innellan.

lift him out of that pit of perdition into which, by his own act, he had been cast.

It is obvious to remark that even this brief glance at what we call 'demoniacal possession' strengthens and confirms the hope for which we have been contending ; viz. that the pains of hell may prove to be a remedial and saving discipline. For if, when men fall into the hands of the devil in this life, they come to hate him with a perfect hatred, and to loathe their bondage to him with a passion so desperate that they will do anything to escape from it, how can we but infer that, when they are delivered into his hands in the life to come, they may in like manner hate him, revolt from him, and eagerly embrace the saving Love which here they refused? We know absolutely nothing of the moral results of being handed over to Satan in the soul of man, save what we can gather

from the history of these demoniacs. But from this history we learn that one of its first and chief effects is desperate revolt against his tyranny, and an eager acceptance of any means of escape from it. And we cannot but infer that in the next 'age' the same cause will produce the same effect.

I know very well how repugnant to the modern set of thought all this talk about demoniacal possession must be; how Science, or what calls itself Science, smiles and jests at the very name of the devil, and sees nothing more than mania where Christ and his apostles saw 'possession.' But science is not the measure of all things, nor is the scientific method the only, or even the highest, method of apprehension open to man. The spirit has its claims as well as the senses and the intellect; and if neither the microscope nor the telescope will render visible to us the very air we

breathe, it is not much cause for wonder that no scientific apparatus can discover to us 'the prince of the powers of the air.' For our best knowledge of spiritual things we must go to spiritual men—to men, *i.e.* who have taken as much pains to educate their spiritual faculties as men of science have taken to cultivate their intellectual perceptions and powers. And if Christ saw the ministry of angels where we see only benign natural forces at work, and the ministry of devils where we see only morbid and abnormal states of the human mind, it seems to me but reasonable that a modest man, conscious of the immense spiritual interval between himself and the Lord from heaven, should elect to trust the spiritual insight of Christ rather than and above his own.

Nor, even from the scientific point of view, can I admit that this question is

closed, and still less that it is closed in a sense adverse to the teaching of the New Testament. There are still unfathomed, if not unfathomable, mysteries behind the phenomena of madness, and of mental states that fall short of madness or rise high above it—hypnotism, for example, and ecstasy, which Science has hardly studied, much less resolved. To us, sitting at our ease over our books, and carrying ourselves as though only an interesting literary problem were in hand, it may be easy enough to ignore the more terrible and exceptional facts of human life and experience ; but Science, before it delivers its verdict, is bound to study and comprehend them all. And the facts of sin, of unnatural and monstrous sins, or of sins carried to an unnatural excess or producing monstrous effects, are many and bewildering.

Even I myself, despite the quiet and even tenour of my life, seem to myself both to have felt the devil at work upon myself and to have seen him at work upon my fellows; and how much more must they have seen whose lives are spent in the haunts of vice, or in prisons and asylums? For example, I once knew a singularly plain, honest, God-fearing man, who took quite exceptional pains, often to his loss, to avoid the temptations to which his handicraft exposed him, and yet was hung for a most foul and wicked murder. And though he never for a moment doubted his own responsibility for the crime, never once sought to excuse or palliate it, but was instantly bowed down with penitence and shame, yet up to the last moment of his life he could give no other account of this sudden and monstrous departure from the tenour and habit of his life than that

the devil had entered into him and *made* him do it. And, again, I have seen a young girl of not more than sixteen or seventeen years of age at most, borne along a crowded street in London by four burly policemen, who was indulging herself in what prison authorities know as a 'break out,'—filling the air with horrid yells and a torrent of filthy oaths, her whole body plunging with a fierce convulsive motion which seemed as if it must crack every sinew in her slender frame, and fling her from the strong restraining hands by which she was held. She was followed by another girl younger than herself, who was walking as yet between two policemen, who grasped her by either arm ; and as I passed them I saw the glitter in her eyes, and the colour flaming up into her cheeks, and the fierce sympathy and defiance of her face as she watched her companion and listened to

her shrieks, and I felt as though that poor child of God were being changed into a child of Satan under my eyes. I could *see* the devil rising in her as I looked ; and before I could get out of sight and hearing, she too was tearing herself with a violence absolutely incredible, and foaming out yells of defiance against God and man which rang in my ears for many a day thereafter.

And we English are a cold self-restrained people, not easily or lightly moved to gusts of stormy and uncontrolled passion. Talk to an Italian who has been gravely injured by a neighbour, and he will pathetically lament to you, not so much the wrong he has suffered, but that 'his blood has been made hot,' that he has been made angry, as if *that* were the gravest injury of all. And so common is the feeling in Italy that an angry man is no longer master of himself or responsible for his actions that,

even when he snatches up knife or dagger and plunges it into his tormentor, no jury can be trusted to convict him of murder. Travel farther south or east, and among the Orientals, ordinarily so grave, composed, and self-possessed, there is absolutely no excess of passion or lust into which men may not be hurried by a power which they feel to be alien to themselves, but which they cannot resist when once they have yielded to it.

Of such men—and our Lord and his Apostles must have seen many of them—under such provocations, we say pitifully that they are ‘not themselves,’ or that they are ‘out of themselves.’ But if a man in this consuming and exhausting blaze of passion is no longer himself, *who is he?* if he is *out of* himself, who or what is it that is in him, driving him to ruin and perdition with a force beyond his own?

Christ would have said, I think, that he had given place to the devil, and that therefore he was 'possessed;' that two spirits were at strife within him, and that even he himself could not be sure which of the two it was that was speaking and acting within him. And, for one, I am disposed to believe, on purely rational grounds, as by my faith in Christ I am bound to believe, that that is the true view of the case, as certainly it is the most charitable. For while men are driven to such monstrous conditions, and to acts so monstrous and unnatural, what do we gain by denying the existence and prompting of the devil? If there be no evil spirit at work within them, possessing them and driving them against the currents of their proper nature, so much the worse for them, so much the worse for humanity at large. All we gain by denying the existence of

the devil, or by doubting that 'he is very potent with such as they,' is the conviction that men must be even more evil than we have supposed them to be.

What, again, are we to make of the great criminals of history—of the monstrous tyrants of ancient Egypt and Assyria, of the Cæsars, the Borgias, the Medicis, the Buonapartes, or even of the Turkish pashas who, by their 'devilish atrocities,' lately desolated Bulgaria, as they are even now desolating many a fair region of the earth? While *they*, and such as they, are in the world, why should we, who ourselves are men and to whom nothing human can be alien, care to deny that the devil is in the world, and that, in ways inscrutable to us, he has gained possession of them?

'Ah yes,' it may be said; 'and if we may cherish hope for men so depraved as

these, may we not cherish some faint hope even for the devil and his angels?' But that is a question to which I can make no reply, for the New Testament does not reply to it. Those who knew most of the spiritual world tell us nothing, or nothing definite, of the ultimate fate of the angels who kept not their first estate. If any man likes to hope that, since the devil has so often helped to save men's spirits by destroying their flesh, he himself may one day be saved by being destroyed, I know of nothing in the New Testament to forbid such a hope, and of nothing to warrant it.

When we ask, 'Lord, what shall this man do?' meaning thereby, 'What is to become of him?' the Lord is apt to reply: 'What is that to thee? Follow thou me.' It is enough for us to know that He who died for all sin will take away our sin whenever we will let Him; and that what-

ever we or our fellows may need, whatever discipline here or hereafter, whatever 'salting with fire,' in order that we may be redeemed from the bondage of evil into the freedom and gladness of a righteousness as perfect as his own, will not be withheld from us. Our cry should still be—

Take me, O infinite Cause, and cleanse me of
wrong !
Take me, raise me to higher life through centuries
long !
Cleanse me, by pain, if need be, through æons of
days !
Take me, and purge me ; still I will answer with
praise,
There is no Death for ever !

And, for the rest, we must trust to the Mercy which is more than all our sins, and to that final and complete victory of good over evil in which Christ Himself has invited us to rest.

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